

WINTER — 1954/55

# Lutheran World

Vol. I, No. 4

*Lutheranism and Ecumenicity*

VILMOS VAJTA

*Grundtvig and American Theology Today*

JOHANNES KNUDSEN

*The Lesson of North African Church History*

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*The Church of South India* HANS W. GENSICHEN

*Burning Problems Among the Churches of the Far  
East*

FRIDTJOV BIRKELI

Publication  
of the  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

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# LUTHERAN WORLD

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*Our Church claims to be for all people, and she makes this claim because of her consciousness that she stands wholly for the one truth by which all Christendom lives. If the other communions desire the Word of God, and if they are, nevertheless, unable to recognize the ecumenical character of Lutheranism, then they must prove to us that we depart from that Word in any respect. If, on the other hand, we are able to convince ourselves that the Word of God bears testimony for us, then the question of the ecumenicity of Lutheranism is decided.*

*Thus this hour becomes an hour of solemn self-examination. Our Church can rejoice in her ecumenical character only so long as she really, in all her doctrine and in all her life, deals seriously and earnestly with the Word of God and with the central importance of confession to Christ. We are serious enough not to avoid the selfexamination, to which this claim of ours summons us.*

*Our Church, just because she is a Church of faith, must also be a Church of repentance, or she will cease to exist. But the more deeply and the more sincerely she bows down and purifies herself in penitence to God, the more can she rejoice that she is the Church of the word concerning Christ, a preacher of Christ, continually calling the other communions to Christ, to Christ alone. Jesus Christ! In that Name we are one, and in this Name we become one with all who believe on Him.*

BISHOP LUDWIG IHMELS

at the Lutheran World Convention, Eisenach, Germany, 1923

VILMOS VAJTA

## Lutheranism and Ecumenicity

The current conversation among the churches continuously confronts Lutheranism with the question of what its attitude towards ecumenicity might be. This question is of significance not only with regard to relationships to other confessions, but also with regard to relations among the Lutheran churches themselves. For unity among the Lutheran churches of the world remains a largely unsolved problem. Whoever wishes to solve the *inter-Lutheran* question must needs draw the *whole ecumenical problem* into the issue.

We shall not here concern ourselves with this problem in all its details<sup>1</sup>. We merely wish to point out the direction in which any attempt to deal with the relationship of Lutheranism and ecumenicity must proceed. In other words, we are here concerned with some essential aspects of the ecumenical movement with a bearing on the confessional situation. For the ecumenical movement cannot escape the fact that there are various denominations, all claiming to be the Church of Jesus Christ. Any endeavor towards further development of the ecumenical movement must be paralleled by the attempt to solve the issue of the confessions and also that of the so-called confessional churches. Wherever you deal with ecumenicity, it is of basic interest to know how the various denominations are to be viewed. And here we generally find two completely different approaches.

One is the so-called branch theory. It regards the churches, that is, the denominations, as branches of one tree, as members of the one Body of Christ. They are separate historical manifestations of the one Church, and all of them are required to give full expression to the actual truth of Christianity. Each branch has its particular task, and no danger of disunity is thereby created. For in the final analysis, all denominations are one in Jesus Christ.

This branch theory might well be characterized as the concept of "enthusiasts". It had distinguished representatives, especially in the early days of the ecumenical movement. Indeed, it probably sprang from the great experience of the first ecumenical meetings, from joy

<sup>1</sup> An earlier issue (*Lutheran World*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 98-111) discussed the ecumenical question in its wider aspects, though within the framework of Faith and Order's Evanston topic.

in the "togetherness" of representatives of churches who had hitherto stood in strong opposition one to the other. In such an atmosphere the branch theory is easily understood; at any rate it had one great function to fulfil: to keep alive the desire to stay together as brethren in the Christian faith.

This theory can hardly have the last word, however. Those who truly labored for the unity of the Church soon gave up this romantic notion and attempted to discover a deeper understanding of the truth and, thus, a more genuine path to Christian unity.

The other extreme is the understanding of those Christians who identify their own denomination with the Church of Jesus Christ. And since there can be only *one* Church, it follows that all others must be condemned. Even if you do not declare them to be the church of the Antichrist, you deny to these others all fellowship in worship and treat them as false or, at least, as inadequate churches.

This explains why some churches remain outside the ecumenical movement or, if they do co-operate (as does the Greek-Orthodox Church), why they do so under the condition of constant re-emphasis of their claim to be the sole true Church. We know also that the Roman Catholic Church officially rejects all contact and co-operation, despite her considerable theological interest in the ecumenical movement. At earlier ecumenical meetings, the Roman Church had answered the invitation extended by the leaders of the ecumenical movement at least to the extent of sending observers; at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, however, the Vatican no longer felt it could continue even this practice — possibly because of the influence of the Roman bishop with local spiritual jurisdiction. There are also, however, Protestant church bodies that have, so far, remained outside the ecumenical movement, such as the Southern Baptists in the USA, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and one of Holland's Reformed Churches. The Greek-Orthodox have co-operated from the beginning, even though they hold to the same theological position. It must be noted that the absolute claims of this Church to which we have already referred find expression at every ecumenical meeting. At the 1952 Faith and Order conference at Lund, the leader of the Orthodox delegation declared at the very outset that his delegation were by no means willing to discuss questions of doctrine; but they would be glad to give information on the doctrine of the true, i. e. the Greek-Orthodox Church<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order*, SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1953, pp. 124 ff.

Their co-operation has been of value in many respects, but basically they hold the same position as those who do not participate in the ecumenical movement<sup>3</sup>.

The proper solution of the relationship between the denominations and the ecumenical movement should be somewhere between the two conceptions just described. It is also my belief that the Lutheran position is to be found there and that it cannot be identified with either of the two lines of thought outlined above, even though you might find representatives of both even in the Lutheran Church. It is my intention to delineate the main line of Lutheran thought and action concerning the ecumenical movement. Such a theological report on the attitude of Lutheranism to ecumenicity might be fruitful in several directions.

In ecumenical circles the Lutheran Church is known as the church that most emphatically represents the confessional standpoint and that acts and decides on this basis in the ecumenical context. The question has sometimes been raised whether such "confessional" attitude may leave the door still open for ecumenical co-operation or whether it must not of necessity lead to an absolute claim for the Lutheran Church, to the claim to be the one Church of Christ. We can only welcome such questions directed at Lutheranism. They are surely a call to continuous self-examination and a wholesome remedy for any self-satisfaction or self-confidence likely to arise. Nevertheless, people should ask themselves very seriously why such questions are not directed at other churches also. It might repay detailed examination to determine whether, for example, the Anglican Church's attitude towards apostolic succession is not specifically "confessional", whether the constant demands for an "ecumenical attitude" do not hide Unionistic-Reformed tendencies towards a decided "confessionalism", or whether, finally, the rejection of the "historic creeds" on the part of a whole group of churches represented in the World Council does not in itself already represent a confessionalist danger.

In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, let us anticipate and state that the original form of the Lutheran concept of the Church leaves the door wide open for a recognition of Christ's Church even *beyond* those Communion which refer to themselves as

<sup>3</sup> One can certainly be truly joyful about the participation and collaboration of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement. Such joy ought not, however, to cover up the fact that this Church's participation has to date taken place only under outspoken protest against the ecumenical working community. True ecumenical work should therefore aim to eliminate as basically non-ecumenical the Orthodox presupposition of co-operation.

Lutheran<sup>4</sup>. We must emphasize at this point that Lutheranism has ever received a loud call to ecumenicity from this concept of the Church, and I do not hesitate to say that Lutheranism has indeed heeded this call and that its confessionalism is therefore no introverted self-sufficiency but, rather, an ecumenical contribution in the service of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

The confessional status of the Lutheran Church finds expression in the Symbolical Books which include the creeds of the Ancient Church: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Creed of Athanasius, as well as the confessional writings of the Reformation, above all the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechisms.<sup>5</sup> Every ecumenical conversation of the Lutheran churches is based on these confessions. We regard them as a helpful summary of all that the Christian Church has taught through the centuries. We do not see them as barriers to our ecumenicity. Naturally, we must ask in what way these confessions are normative in the Lutheran Church and, more basic still, what relation they hold to Holy Scripture as the original source of the message of Jesus Christ.

Before we give an answer to this, let us face the opinion which maintains that all creeds are unnecessary and actually contrary to the nature of the true Church. It is well-known that there are many within the ranks of so-called Protestantism who deny the helpfulness of confessions in general. This explains why some churches do not use the creed in their worship services. Christian life and Christian worship must be spontaneous, they say, and therefore any attempt to make use of a previously formulated creed is a tendency to seek a substitute for real life and shows a lack of faith, faith which always endeavors to express itself in a confession appropriate to the times and can never simply take over a prescribed text of Christian confession. Surely there is a good deal of truth in the conviction that the Christian creed must ever be an existential confession in the situation by which the Church is confronted at any given moment<sup>6</sup>. The error in this conviction lies in the opinion that such a creed must stand in opposition to the creeds of former days or that, at any rate, the creeds of the past cannot be the expression of realistic, spontaneous and true confession of the Church of today.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. my essay in *Lutheran World*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 110-111.

<sup>5</sup> See *Book of Concord*, Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Mo., 1952. Naturally, the various Lutheran churches differ in their attitude to the confessional writings contained in the original *Liber Concordiae*. The above-named confessional formulations, however, are generally accepted. The acceptance of the Augsburg Confession as true interpretation of the Word of God is the condition for membership in the Lutheran World Federation. (Cf. the LWF constitution in *Directory of the Lutheran World Federation*, Munich, 1953, p. 71.)

<sup>6</sup> See R. Prenter, *Dogmatik I: Skabelse og Genløsning* (Creation and Redemption), København, 1961, esp. pp. 52 f.

In order to support this critical remark, I should like to point to the fact that the Church of today is not a new Church but that she stands in one historical stream with the Church of every age and nation. Today's Christians are not the first men to confess Christ. Their confession must be in harmony with the confession of the Christian Church of the centuries. The Christian has fathers and brothers who share with him the same faith; he himself has reached Christ only by way of this confessing Church. Like our Lord's prayer, the historic creeds of the Church are instruments in the hand of God to bring men to the same faith and to justify them. The so-called "non-confessional" point of view is an illusion. The very rejection of historic creeds is a "confessional" position with tremendous theological implications. However, rather than attempt to analyze this kind of thinking, let us limit ourselves to establishing the justification of the confessional point of view in the Christian Church.

Let us first answer the question: *What actually is the content of the Christian confession?*

The first confession came from heaven at the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matth. 3:17). Accordingly, the first human confession was an acknowledgment of the Son of God, the Messiah: "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matth. 16:15—16). Christian confession thus means professing this Son of God who was born, suffered, was crucified, dead, rose, and who will come again. Recent research on the confessions in the early Church has shown that this christological character determined the nature of the first creed<sup>7</sup>. And therefore the first heresy in the history of the Christian Church is an attempt to deny Christ as the Son of God who became flesh: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God" (1 John 4:2 f.).

Thus we reach our conclusion: there is no Christian faith without a profession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God who became man, was crucified and raised from the dead. We also know that it is this original confession which has come down to us in the Apostles' Creed. There is therefore no Christian Church if the confession of this faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church is lacking. Concern about the creed is thus not a specifically Lutheran heritage; it is, rather, of the essence even of early Christianity; indeed, it is part of

<sup>7</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Die ersten christlichen Glaubensbekenntnisse*, Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon: Zürich, 1943.

man's basic attitude towards the Gospel. You cannot separate the message of Christ and the confession of the Church. Naturally, we are aware of the fact that the words of the creed can be misused and can come from the lips of hypocrites. But this certainly does not mean that we are looking for a "new" creed to place beside this one Christian confession.

The first centuries of the Christian Church should be seen in the light of this statement. The christological controversies of the first centuries, often so difficult to comprehend by present-day Christians, and the confessions resulting from them, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed, together with the statement of the ecumenical council of Chalcedon, can be understood only in the perspective outlined above. We may not neglect this period which clarified the Church's christological doctrine. Our own creed cannot differ from this first confession, because the latter's only concern was to witness to Christ as the Son of God. Our confession is enriched, not impoverished, by the early fathers' struggle with those phrases which have become the basis of Christianity. There is profound spiritual experience in the knowledge that in confessing Christ our voice is not the first but joins in the chorus of witnesses throughout the ages. It is difficult to understand why such confessional attitude should be distrusted by certain Christian denominations. We should, rather, be filled with joy over this unity within the Church, founded in the common profession of Jesus Christ.

This leads us to the second question: *What is the origin of Christian confession?*

There is a simple answer to this: Whenever and wherever the testimony to Jesus Christ as the Son of God is attacked there is a call to confession, that is, to a concentrated witness to Him who represents the whole content of Christian faith. The Christian Church attempts to condense the whole message of the Gospel into one single formula in the words of the Creed. Whoever accepts and lays hold of this has grasped the very heart of the faith; whoever denies it has rejected everything and repudiates the Gospel in its entirety. The Creed is the pointing finger of the Church, directing us to the core, to the foundation upon which is built the whole Church and her faith.

This is the spirit in which the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church were produced. You will misunderstand and misinterpret the Augsburg Confession of 1530 if you do not regard Christ and His work as its focal point<sup>8</sup>. The Augsburg Confession is built on one

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Art. III and IV.

basic confession: Justification comes by faith in Jesus Christ. This is what the confession says by stating in Article VII: "... that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." The much-discussed word "rightly" cannot be properly understood unless it be read in conjunction with the Augustana's basic Article IV on justification. In the days when the basic Christian confession was threatened, this one truth was proclaimed by the Reformation "*magno consensu*", and it condemned all who were trying to introduce a false Gospel into the Church ("*damnamus secus docentes*") by "confessing" human works as means to salvation. This insight of the Augustana is the centre of the Gospel, according to Holy Scripture. When the Lutheran Church holds to the confessional writings, she does not therefore claim any special doctrine which she might put forth as her "special emphasis" beside those of other denominations. Rather, in her confession she pronounces and maintains that which makes a church into the Church of Jesus Christ. Perhaps this perspective will explain why the Lutheran Church so frequently seems unwilling to make concessions for the sake of visible unity which would not be true unity at all. There can be no unity of the Church except where, as we have seen above, the churches agree on this very heart of the faith. This is a basic christological question.

What has been said of the origin of the Reformation confessions applies also to the recent confessions of the Church. During the past decades the Church has undergone an attack by the world equalled only during the most critical periods in her history. State power has usurped control over the Church and has attempted to dictate her preaching. New rulers have come to power. The confession to Jesus Christ the Lord was endangered, the very foundation of the Church was under attack. The Confessional Church in Germany was set up, and just twenty years ago the Barmen Confession was formulated<sup>9</sup>. Similar events took place within the Church of Norway when National Socialism attempted to subjugate her. In a special declaration on church order, the Church maintained the independence of ecclesiastical office by confessing Jesus Christ as her only Lord in the face of political power<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Reprinted in K. D. Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse und grundsätzlichen Äußerungen zur Kirchenfrage* (Confessions and basic pronouncements on the Church question), Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1935. Vol. II (1934) pp. 92—98. For a slightly shortened version in English, merely of the six main points of the Barmen Confession see *The Christian Century*, Chicago, Vol. 51, No. 35 (August 29, 1934) pp. 1083—4.

<sup>10</sup> Reprinted in, e.g., H. C. Christie, *Den norske kirke i kamp* (The Norwegian Church in Battle), Oslo, 1945. pp. 108—112.

Thus even the recent confessions of the Church confirm our thesis that confessions arise out of the necessity clearly to proclaim the essence of the Gospel whenever this is threatened by forces within or without the Church. The Reformation was such a battle for this only Gospel within an official church body which no longer had a place for the centuries-old confession to Jesus Christ as sole Lord: *Solus Christus, sola Scriptura, sola gratia*. This imbued the word "sola" with tremendous importance. In it was everything concentrated, and nothing was omitted. To place something else beside this "sola" would have denied the original message of the Church.

This returns us to the earlier question referring to the relationship of the Gospel to the Church's confessional writings. We also inquired in what way these confessions were normative. Now we can understand more clearly that the confessionalism of the Lutheran Church does not seek to introduce into the Church new norms for the message about Christ, that, rather, it opposes this very message to the false interpretations of each period, that it protects the message against them and condemns the successive formulations of the enemies of the Gospel. The confessional writings spring from the same spirit as the confession of the early Church. Thus the apostle Peter addresses the persecuted congregations: "... But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. (Note the admonition pointing to the core of all Christian confession, namely Christ as Lord.) Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. . ." (1 Peter 3:15). This verse is of special interest linguistically. The "defense" that is urged is expressed by the Greek word *apologia*, while the "account" (i. e. for our hope) is rendered by the word *logos*. Thus *apologia* and *logos* belong together; confession and the Word of God are inseparably united. This is the way to hallow the Lord, our God. Truly the confession which springs from the Word of God is a Christian confession. God is holy in Himself, regardless of our confession; but by her confession the Church partakes of this holiness of the Lord. This means: Again and again, the confession of the Church derives life from God's gracious deeds among us, accomplished by His holy Word, His *logos*, which is the sole foundation of our hope. Confession and God's Word are thus part one of the other.

It must be the same with the confessions of the Lutheran Church, and this is indeed how the confessors of the 16th century understood their confession. Never did they place it between themselves and the Word of God; they did not set up new principles for the doctrine of the Church but merely pointed to the one which has been given the

Church by God's gracious revelation in Jesus Christ. Their confession was based solely on the message of Christ as the foundation of the Church's hope and thus as the only bulwark of defense (*apologia*) against the world.

It is this confession, hallowing as it does (in the above sense) the name of God, which unites us, the present-day confessors, into the communion of the Church of Christ in all the ages. That is why the tidings of the crucified and risen Lord are the focus of confession. The vision of this close internal tie between Christian kerygma and the creed can often be found with Luther himself.

Neither Luther nor our symbolic books know of a confession of anything besides the message of Christ. When the Lutheran World Federation states at its aim "To bear united witness before the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God for salvation; to cultivate unity of faith and confession among the Lutheran Churches of the world . . ."<sup>11</sup>, then it confesses the message of Christ and binds together those who hold the same confession. Thus its act of confession stands in intimate harmony with the evangel of Christ and, consequently, also with the message of the confessional books of the Lutheran Church. Such a confession must continuously be re-examined in the light of the Gospel of Christ. In this manner we show our loyalty to Holy Scripture and to the confessions as historical events of the Church. To the Lutheran Church, therefore, confessionalism does not mean that the Church is tied to formulations of the 16th century but that she is tied to the good news of Christ. Not they who constantly quote or simply repeat the formulations of the confessional writings are Lutherans but, rather, they who are prepared, as were the fathers of the 16th century, to let themselves be confronted by the eternal Gospel in this our day and who interpret it by defending it against all contemporary misinterpretations. I believe that I can justly maintain that whenever we speak of the Christian message, whenever we confess it and witness to it, we speak in harmony with our confessional writings, in fact with their actual words. On the other hand, I am quite aware of the fact that it is by no means self-evident that we agree with the confessional writings, no matter how assiduously we cite them as witnesses. I know that there is confessional legalism even among Lutheran churches, but think I may claim that it is simply an aberration and not found in the mainstream of Lutheran thought.

We have now reached a position from which it should be clear why Lutherans in the ecumenical movement ever point to the confession.

<sup>11</sup> *Directory of the Lutheran World Federation; loc. cit.*

It is their conviction that true unity of the Church must go hand in hand with a common confession which clearly outlines the Gospel and defends it against misinterpretation. In the early Church, a confession of the Kyrios Christos was a satisfactory statement, since it was given at the risk of one's life; martyrdom was part of confession. To confess Christ as Lord was to be a martyr. We in our time are not afflicted in this way (at least not in the Western world), and therefore there is danger that the confession may turn into empty words on the lips of men. That is why we must go beyond this and explain what Christ means to us or what He means according to the confession of the early Church. In the light of this it was a real ecumenical achievement when the representatives of the different churches who met 1927 in Lausanne agreed upon the early creeds as the basis for ecumenical discussion. This was a hopeful sign on the road to Christian unity<sup>12</sup>. In contrast, two years ago the Faith and Order conference at Lund seemed prepared to go back on all this. The search for doctrinal agreement presented its greatest obstacle. The statement on "consensus in doctrine", a veritable hodge-podge of opinions, reads as follows:

"All accept the Holy Scriptures as either the sole authority for doctrine or the primary and decisive part of those authorities to which they would appeal. Most accept the Ecumenical Creeds as an interpretation of the truth of the Bible or as marking a distinctive stage in the working-out of the orthodox faith. Some assign a special importance to the credal documents of the early Ecumenical Councils. Some would say that to found unity on any creeds is to found it on something human, namely our understanding of the Gospel and our theological work in formulating its meaning. Some judge in accordance with the Inner Light and the leadings of the Spirit and are therefore concerned to witness against the use of outward creeds when these are held to be necessary or sufficient<sup>13</sup>."

The Lutheran Church must consider this a step backward. Probably it was unavoidable since many churches who were not represented at Lausanne have joined the World Council. But they ought to be brought to the insight in which Lausanne had viewed the road of common confession. A certain amount of ecumenical patience should be part of the Lutheran approach. For we know that unity of the Church in the sense of a truly common faith, and therefore also of common worship, can hardly be the achievement of a few years

<sup>12</sup> H. N. Bate, ed., *Faith and Order Proceedings of the World Conference Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, London, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> Oliver S. Tomkins, *op. cit.* p. 31.

but is probably a task for several generations. For this very reason we warn of that all too enthusiastic ecumenicity which overlooks the real difficulties and achieves church unity only in matters where unity is not essential<sup>14</sup>. Love of neighbor is ever a part of faith, and it includes love of our neighbor-church. If the ecumenical movement is to avoid the danger of turning into something like a new denomination of enthusiasts, a select aristocracy of those who have learnt to deal with one another at ecumenical gatherings, then it must convince the congregations and not merely church leaders. Only in such a way could the ecumenical movement grow into a great event in church history by which not merely the few of the inner circle might be saved, but also all the multitude of neighbors.

From this point of view, the step backwards which we have recognized at Lund may turn out to be a blessing. For this same period saw something like a new beginning in ecumenicity. In years past, the churches' ecumenical discussion had been carried on more or less by a comparative method of doctrinal statistics. Each denomination was able to present its own peculiarities and to assert its own doctrine on basic questions. This method, at all events, brought the churches to greater knowledge about each other, but it inevitably reached a stage where nothing further was likely to happen. To know one another may mean a great deal, but it does not necessarily provide a solution to problems. Misunderstandings and prejudices may be avoided in this manner; but if, on a question of Truth, all are concerned merely to preserve their own position, a deadlock must result. In this situation, Lund actually opened a new door by making it apparent that the future path could only be objective theological study of the essence of the Christian message. No longer will a presentation of the points of view of the various denominations suffice; there must be exegetic and systematic work to establish a common understanding of the Christian message as it is given to us in Holy Scripture. The goal is a better road to union for the churches as they search for a biblical answer in their conversation and seek guidance in this endeavor from God the Holy Spirit. The churches have begun anew, treading this path together; the subject of their study is: Christ and His Church. Undoubtedly this is a good start.

<sup>14</sup> In my previously quoted essay (notes 1 and 4) the disunity possible within the Church was distinguished from that which divides the Church with the help of the separate concepts of Law and Gospel (see esp. pp. 102—107.) This might be the point whence a clearer understanding can be derived of Lutheran hesitation in the face of attempts to achieve unity such as that of the united Church of South India. So long as church order serves as a constitutive principle for the unity of the Church, any such order must be rejected as dangerous, that is, as in competition with the Gospel. Not until the Gospel is recognized as the sole unifying factor may order, too, be granted its relative value. But this is precisely what did *not* occur in South India.

However, we must still raise the question of how Lutherans feel about this new course. The answer is simply that they approve wholeheartedly, and this on the basis of their *confessional* attitude. This is not surprising. If confessionalism is understood in the way it has been characterized above, then this new development is ground for pure joy. Many Lutherans have contributed to the attainment of the present position, for it coincides with the true Lutheran confessional attitude: to open the Holy Scriptures and study the message of Christ. As long as Holy Scripture stands superior to the confessional writings there can be no doubt that this is the road to unity. But Lutherans will also continue to insist that the centre of the kerygma be kept in view, lest the discussions exhaust themselves on the peripheries. And they will bend every effort to establish the scriptural foundation of their confession in the face of other interpretations. They will do so in the conviction that the kerygma is the power of God and that it is able to prevail over all men without itself falling under the control of men. Thus honest theological research does not run counter to the confessional concern as long as such confessionalism is bound by the authority of Holy Scripture and is committed to prove its current confession on the basis of biblical testimony. Rather than contradict, this supports the Lutheran approach. That is why Lutherans are now more than ever obliged to bring their testimony into ecumenical discussions. Ecumenicity and Lutheranism can go hand in hand if Lutheranism, true to its own nature, seeks unity in the evangel and testifies to it, and if ecumenicity is more than some sort of doctrinal compromise or, worse, the expression of theological indifference. True ecumenicity will always find the full support of Lutheranism.

Thus it should go almost without saying that among the purposes of the Lutheran World Federation there is one "to foster Lutheran participation in ecumenical movements"<sup>15</sup>. There are many who can only see an obstacle to the desired goal in a confessional organization such as the Lutheran World Federation. Perhaps it is so, indeed, to a *certain* kind of ecumenicity which will never find an ally in us. Nonetheless, the common participation of a whole confession, in the true sense of this word, in the ecumenical movement, may well be helpful and may even represent the only way to unity. For, after all, we cannot simply ignore the fact that at the moment Christendom is split into many confessional groups. Only when we take these individual churches seriously is there any real hope of

<sup>15</sup> *Directory of the Lutheran World Federation*, p. 72.

unity. Were we to establish an ecumenical community by by-passing these historical denominations, the result would merely be a new denomination and not a Church that has *found* her unity.

If we wish to understand why Lutheranism approaches the question of church union with such great caution, we must consider the historical background of the movement for Lutheran unity. One of the events which still determine Lutheran attitude is the so-called (Old) Prussian Union. In 1817, the Lutheran churches under the authority of the Prussian King Frederick William III were forced into union with the Reformed Church, under threat of coercion. Many Lutherans preferred emigration, persecution, and suffering to an artificial church union with uncertain doctrinal foundations and a unity which was an idea the ruler had derived from the idealist and romantic philosophy current in Germany. Ever since that time there has been a veritable horror of "unionism" among Lutherans, especially among the groups that had emigrated under these circumstances. On the other hand this was the very time when Lutherans had begun to establish closer unity among themselves on a confessional basis in order to strengthen their fellowship and effectively to counter all unionist tendencies which overlooked real differences.

If this historical background explains the fear of unionism in the Lutheran churches, there is, however, another trait which becomes strongly evident in Lutheran co-operation, an emphasis on the ecumenicity of Lutheranism. Recently one of my friends in the ecumenical movement told me of a university town where a lecture series was to be held. Different denominations had been requested to present their views and to explain their church's attitude to ecumenical work. In the course of the talks, each lecturer reportedly stressed the fact that *his* was the ecumenical denomination. Probably it is only during the last few years in which the ecumenical movement has become so important a feature of our church life that such claims have become popular. But the Lutheran claim of ecumenicity does not date from such a recent period.

When the Lutheran World Convention, predecessor of the Lutheran World Federation, held its first assembly in 1923 in Eisenach, Germany, the president of the Convention gave a lecture on precisely this subject<sup>16</sup>. Remember that this preceded the two great ecumenical meetings of Stockholm and Lausanne. Ecumenicity within the Lutheran Church, and a sense of responsibility for it, is not a recent

<sup>16</sup> *The Lutheran World Convention: The Minutes, Addresses and Discussions of the conference at Eisenach, Germany, August 19th to 26th, 1923.* United Lutheran Publishing House: Philadelphia, 1925, pp. 56-63.

development but a heritage. This heritage was of decisive significance at the Lund assembly of 1947 when the Lutheran World Federation was formed. The Lutheran Church did not originate in a desire or a "call" for separation, and by her historical position she has ever been destined to work for unity.

One could list a large number of events in the history of the ecumenical movement through which Lutherans helped prepare the way of unity by their active participation. Perhaps I may just refer to one small but significant example, to the report of the section on "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" at the Edinburgh conference<sup>17</sup>. It was the only one accepted unanimously by the assembly and was, in the main, the work of Lutheran theologians. Lutherans today should gather confidence from this and the courage to participate wholeheartedly in the ecumenical endeavor.

But one must add something more to this. In view of what has been said it is not enough if theologians at an ecumenical gathering work out a report—no matter how stimulating this may turn out to be. Nor would it be sufficient even though this report were to deal with one of the main articles of the Christian faith. All this belongs to the realm of professional theology. Certainly it is of the greatest importance when theological experts reach a consensus; but a further step is needed, the step *from theological reports to confession by the Church*. Ecumenical documents do not become truly ecumenical, do not really contribute towards unity, until the Christian Congregation herself has given a joyful assent to whatever was spoken here or there, at Edinburgh, Lund, or at Evanston, until she can declare that these pronouncements are truly her confession, the confession of the Church. Only such confessing action can establish the work of the theological experts as a service in the face of the Church's division. For theology by itself cannot heal this condition, though it may well contribute an important preliminary. The unity of the Church becomes visible only in binding confession. Such a course is certainly "Lutheran"; at the same time it is no different from any true New Testament witness to Christ.

If this step to the confession of the Church in ecumenicity is ever ventured, when unity of the Churches is manifested on the basis of this confession, then the thus-provided *historical* confession will quite naturally become guide and basis for the future of this Church—just as, for instance, the Augsburg Confession is today still the standard for the Church of the Reformation. None in this Church

<sup>17</sup> Leonh. Hudgson, ed., *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh August 3—18, 1937, London, 1938*, pp. 224—227.

can disregard the confession, just as you cannot disregard it in the "ecumenical" Church of any age. For the heart of the Church beats in the confession to Him, the dead and risen Lord. If Lutheranism were to lose sight of this common confession of the Church, it would give up not only its own nature, but its Lord. For the sake of this common confession Lutheranism today takes its place in the ecumenical movement, to guide this movement towards the Church, towards a confessing Church.

*Many of us hope and expect that something will happen in Christendom, but we forget meantime that something has happened and that something is actually constantly happening right now in the present time. Something did happen when Christ came into the world as the living Word and manifested the life to us. Something does happen today when we have the living Word with us and Christ Himself is in our midst. These are realities, facts, and actualities. When Word and Sacrament are employed something happens, namely our actual incorporation in the Body of Christ; here is the point where the living Word becomes the life-giving Word: the Word gives us the life.*

BISHOP ANDERS NYGREN  
at the Lutheran World Federation  
Assembly, Hannover, 1952

## Grundtvig and American Theology Today

Interest in Grundtvig is on the increase in America today. The reason for this is that this Danish churchman has something important to say to our time and that there is need for his ideas. This has not always been considered so, and prior to the present upsurge of interest there was either absence of knowledge or a critical misunderstanding of him. Two factors contributed to this. The first factor was the direct opposition of conservative Lutheran groups who felt that his anthropology and his view of the Bible were contrary to sound doctrine. This adverse opinion is reflected in A. R. Wentz's "The Lutheran Church in American History" in which the bald statement is made that part of the Danish Lutheran Church broke with the Grundtvig-influenced group because of their "false doctrine"<sup>1</sup>. Such opposition has now largely disappeared, or is disappearing, partly because it has been replaced by a positive appreciation of Grundtvig, especially as a great hymn-writer, and partly because the great majority of American Lutherans have arrived, openly or by implication, at an understanding of Scripture which eliminates the criticism of Grundtvig common in the nineteenth century.

The other factor which led to a misunderstanding of Grundtvig is to be found, curiously enough, in the rather scathing remarks of his own countryman and contemporary, Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard, with his emphasis upon the individual character of the Christian life, seemed to lack receptiveness for Grundtvig's weight upon the historical and communal character of the church. Furthermore, Grundtvig irritated Kierkegaard personally. The two men lived in the same narrow bourgeois environment, and the idiosyncrasies and expansiveness of Grundtvig grated upon the sensitiveness of the precise and meticulous younger philosopher. The somewhat esoteric character of the Grundtvigian fellowship, which Kierkegaard knew from his father's home<sup>2</sup>, also caused a reaction. The mutual antipathy of the two great Danes is regrettable when we consider that they shared far more than they disagreed. Both men had experienced a severe personal crisis which led them to a positive Christian faith,

<sup>1</sup> p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Weltzer: *Grundtvig og Søren Kierkegaard*, 1952.

both of them belonged to the same country and were at home in the same church, and both of them battled within the same ecclesiastical situation against the deadwood of the church and against the religious philosophy of German idealism. Grundtvig directed his attack primarily against Schelling and Kierkegaard against Hegel. — Kierkegaard is now avidly read in America, and his satirical remarks about Grundtvig, taken out of their setting, have led to some strange opinions about Grundtvig. But oddly enough, the same remarks have also led to an inquiring curiosity and a growing interest. "First Kierkegaard and then Grundtvig" seems to be a common progression.

The time is now ripe for a real Grundtvig interest and concern in America. He has long been known in educational circles for his influence on the Danish Folk Schools, and there is a growing appreciation of his hymns, which are fairly well translated in considerable number. The mounting interest in his contribution is now theological, however. The reason for this is primarily that American church life has developed to a situation where Grundtvig's ideas not only can make an impact but where there is an increasingly conscious need for his ideas. A barrier is formed, however, by the inaccessibility of his writings. While Kierkegaard's elegant and precise prose could be rendered in the English language, and has almost completely been translated, so that everyone may have direct access to his thoughts, Grundtvig is embedded within a ponderous and verbose prose or an intimate and flowery poetry which handicaps translation. No translations have yet been made and none are planned, but eventually they must appear in some form.

To appreciate Grundtvig one must first recognize certain personal characteristics without an understanding of which penetration is difficult. First of all, Grundtvig was generally sharply polemical. He was always battling—for something but also against something. This controversial character often led to a dialectic onesidedness where the opposite, and often equally firmly maintained emphasis seems absent. Secondly, he had a strong tendency, particularly in his later years, to dogmatize his own position so that the inherently dynamic nature of his views became formal and even static. Thirdly, he was ponderous and slow of growth. Even his longevity is part of this picture. At the age of twenty-seven he experienced his conversion; at forty-two he launched his doctrine of the church which had been in the making for fifteen years; at forty-nine he expounded his anthropology and subsequently developed his educational ideas; at sixty-five he threw himself into active political participation; at seventy-two he wrote reflective doctrinal treatises; until his death (in 1872)

at eighty-nine he was active as a preacher; and all the time he was producing poetic and historical works. Compare this to Kierkegaard who died at the age of forty-two. This avalanche of growth makes precise analysis difficult and presents apparently contradictory emphases. The truth is, however, that through the great variety of interests and apparently changing emphases there runs a sure thread of consistent development where one viewpoint emerges with inexorable necessity from another with a lifelong, although often submerged, consistency.

Finally, although Grundtvig was an inspired leader of prophetic mold, he nevertheless based his views on an almost incredible amount of hard intellectual work. This work was first of all of a historical character; he plowed deeply into Scripture and the history of mankind as well as the history of the church. But it was also profoundly philosophical. There is an increasing awareness today, stimulated by Henning Høirup's brilliant dissertation, that Grundtvig was a fine philosopher in his own right<sup>3</sup>. Philosophy was only a tool, however. He developed no systematic philosophy, and he had no interest in such. But he plowed deeply in the realm of philosophy and his seemingly exclusive inspirational proclamations are always undergirded by a tremendous amount of concentrated intellectual activity.

In the limited space of a magazine article it is impossible to include all the factors that bear on the subject of the title or to give an adequate treatment of even a selected number. A choice must be made and we shall concentrate on those factors which seem to be of most direct interest to the American theological scene. This means that we must eliminate several elements, and we shall not include in this article any discussion of Grundtvig's hymns, his educational ideas, his voluminous historical and antiquarian production, or his civic and political participation. We shall attempt to concentrate upon his view of revelation and the Church, and upon his anthropology.

A vital experience in his twenty-seventh year gave Grundtvig a strong and permanent experience of the validity of his personal faith and thereby a lasting assurance of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Subsequently he became a fervent crusader for this faith, and he clung to its Lutheran expression which had been current in his childhood home and had prevailed in the Danish church before the acids of Rationalism had disturbed and vitiated many of its basic

<sup>3</sup> Henning Høirup: *Grundtvigs Syn paa Tro og Erkendelse*, 1949.

tenets. By the same token he became a strong antagonist of Rationalistic doctrines, and he considered them to be a vital danger to the Church. For a number of years he fought actively for a return to the established doctrines of the Lutheran Church, and he considered the inspired Scriptures to be the infallible source of doctrine and the adequate vehicle of revelation. Then, for a number of years, circumstances took him away from the active service of the church, and while his attitudes did not immediately change, he withdrew from the active expression of his crusade and entered into a period of historical research and philosophical study. Speculating upon the problem of knowledge, he departed from the usual ontological search for knowledge and its evidence. Basing his thinking upon the revelation of God in Christ, he concentrated upon the evidence of God in the world. How, he asked, do we know the God in whom we believe as He manifests Himself in the world? He found the answer that we know the God in whom we believe through His action in the history of mankind.

Returning after some years to the active ministry, the problem of the evidence for God's revelation in Christ as an existential reality became acute for him. The solution, which he had up to now maintained, that the Bible was the adequate vehicle of revelation, was put to a severe test. He realized that the Rationalists, whom he consistently battled as the foe of basic and historic Christianity, resorted to the same Bible, and by exactly the same methods as were used by orthodox Lutherans, to prove their critical contentions in regard to the most important tenets of the faith. It therefore dawned upon him that the Bible was not the basis for his or his opponents' arguments; the basis was their respective interpretations of the Bible. This meant that the Christian faith had come to depend upon exegetical and doctrinal interpretations of Scripture, and that these interpretations were influenced by relative and human considerations. The Bible never lost its sacred or authoritative character for Grundtvig, but he realized that there must be found a sure basis upon which the Bible could be interpreted. In other words, he sought an answer to the existential problem of the adequate vehicle of revelation. In this dilemma he resorted to the evidences for God's activity in the world at which he had arrived in his philosophical studies. The God in whom we believe through His revelation in Jesus Christ is known to us today through the historical impact of His revelation in the Christian Church.

Something was missing, however. It might be proclaimed that the adequate vehicle of God's revelation is the Church; but there are

many concepts of the Church, ranging from her identification with the Roman hierarchy to the Rationalist definition in terms of current religious ideas. There must, Grundtvig felt, be evident in history an unchangeable element which brings to us the original content and the dynamic of revelation. He found his answer in the Church's response to revelation. The response is her confession of Christ as divine Lord and Saviour which has always been intimately related to the covenant of baptism. Where men, in response to God, confess their faith in the triune God, and in Christ as the Son of God and their divine Saviour, there we have the basic content and the unchangeable evidence of the true faith and the true Church. Upon the Word of God to us in baptism we build our lives, and in the living Word, which is Christ in His Church, we have God operative in the world. The Church, then, is the adequate vehicle of revelation.

The question is probably not phrased thus today, that we are looking for an expression of the adequate vehicle of revelation in Twentieth Century America. But, phrased in other terms, we are engaged in that very problem. We may speak of it in terms of existential realities; we may call it the problem of authority, of dynamics, and of motivations; and we may have to rephrase Grundtvig's assertions in order to make them applicable to our present situation; but the parallel is striking and the pertinence of Grundtvig is obvious. On the American scene we have, outside the Catholic fold with its formalistic answers of office and orders, the same two classes with which Grundtvig contended. On the one hand and on the one extreme, we have those who claim Biblical authority for their views but who rest their claims in a narrow fundamentalism or who make this claim a part of their effort to retain the doctrinal solutions of the post-Reformation period at the price of a disregard of modern problems. These modern problems include historical and theological studies of the Bible as well as the whole practical impact of a modern world view and ecumenical inevitabilities. On the other hand and the other extreme, we have the modern counterpart of Rationalism with philosophical and humanistic undergirdings of ethico-religious endeavors. Like the Rationalists of 150 years ago, this latter group also bases its claims on the authority of Scripture, but a Scripture made servile by interpretation to mean whatever is necessary and convenient. We are in the grip of an "exegetical papacy" just as the Danish church was when Grundtvig coined this famous expression.

America needs Grundtvig's emphasis upon the Church which brings us the living Word which is Jesus Christ, the dynamic of revelation and salvation. But we must be cautious in making this

assertion, because there are such varying interpretations of the Church. Certainly we must avoid the hierarchical identification of the Catholic claims, but we must also avoid the other extreme with its un-historical emphasis upon the direct spiritual creation of the Church. The Church is a real, historical, corporate fellowship of faith, of which the sign is her confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, which has its vital content in the Word and the sacraments, and which may be given expression in many and valid outer forms, each of which rightfully may call itself a church. It was one of Grundtvig's rich contributions that he saw the need for the church to express itself in the language and the culture of a people, and certainly there is a great striving toward this goal in our country as well as in the younger churches throughout the world.

When Grundtvig emphasized the living word, he was not only thinking of oral communication of spiritual values; he meant to emphasize the fact that God, who communicates to man through His Word, and who revealed Himself in the Word-become-flesh, is in living communication with His people today. This communication not only takes place through appropriation of the revealed Gospel as we have it recorded in Scripture; it takes place through the activity of God in the historic Church. There is a real presence of Christ—in the sacraments, yes, but there because Christ is present and active in the fellowship of faith which we call the Church. He is at the right hand of God, which means that through Him God is active among us. When we confess Him we share His life, and in the reality of life in Him we possess the salvatory event which breaks the power of sin and death and which gives us the power to live in the world. God's Word is living and active today, and it is the existential reality on which we rely. Through Christ, God is operative, and His means is the Church.—This Grundtvig would say to us, and this we need to hear.

There is no rejection of Luther in Grundtvig's view of the Church; if anything there is a fulfilment. An element is introduced which had been inherent in Luther's thought but which had not become articulate in Lutheranism. In its defensive emphasis upon doctrine, the Lutheran Church has often fortified herself within a static position which becomes less and less defensible as time goes on. American Lutheranism has succeeded by dint of a tremendous moral and doctrinal discipline, and by its realistic and practical character, in maintaining its hold upon its people and expanding its numbers; but it has often chosen to defend the wrong things, and it has not always chosen the best ground on which to maintain its position. As a result

it has often become defiant and has thus lacked a ground upon which it can engage modern problems and still retain its sound and essential emphases. The traditional stand, that Scripture offers such a ground, places it between the exclusive alternatives of literalism on the one hand and dependence upon theologies of the New Testament on the other. The first choice leaves it powerless to meet modern intellectual problems except with a postulate of defiance, and the second choice places it defenselessly in the power of theologians whose solutions vary from generation to generation. If the Reformation emphasis is to be rescued from ossification on the one hand and a subjective stripping of scriptural content on the other, it must be anchored in a view which maintains its authoritative character and yet places it in the historical context of the Church which is the Body of Christ and which establishes her character through her living and dynamic confession of Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour. Grundtvig rejected neither the Bible nor the doctrines of the Lutheran Church. He placed both in a setting where their great and authoritative worth could be maintained. The source of Christian life is Christ in His Church. We receive this life in baptism, and we nurture, renew, and strengthen it at the Lord's table. Both these sacraments, instituted by Christ, are given to the Church<sup>4</sup>.

Man is justified by faith. Through the victory of Christ, on the cross and Easter morning, the right relationship to God is established. The repentant sinner who grasps this offer of grace enters into a newness of life where his sins are not reckoned against him. Forgiveness of sin is a power which gives him motivation, will, and strength to live in the world, i. e. to love his neighbor, and it is an eternal life with God which conquers the power of death. So far, so good! With all this Grundtvig agreed, and in its reality he lived. His anthropological problem was not the redeemed life; it was the problem of the created life. What significance has my life as a creature of God? What does it mean that we are created in the image of God?

This problem became acute for Grundtvig some years after he had clarified his thoughts concerning the nature of revelation and the Church. Its solution was inherent in the basic ideas which he had developed concerning the evidence of God's work in the world, where

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to observe that some of the modern approaches to New Testament interpretation were anticipated in Grundtvig's ideas of the Church and the authority of Scripture. First of all, the conclusion of modern studies that the source of the gospels and the understanding of their message must be found in the Church which proclaimed the Gospel, is in many ways an application of Grundtvig's view of the Word. And secondly, the discussion of the kerygma and the mythos in the gospels can find interesting material in Grundtvig's discussion of the dynamic character of myths. (See my article in *The Lutheran Quarterly*, Gettysburg, November 1954, Vol. VI, No. 4, pp. 299—309.)

he came to the conclusion that God works in the history of man. He needed a catalyst, however, before the nature of the problem and the nature of the answer became evident. The catalyst was given him on his voyages to England 1829—31. The object of the journeys was antiquarian study of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, a research project upon which he entered after he had resigned his ministry in protest against the attitude of church officials. Important as these studies are, they fade in significance when compared to the personal benefit which he derived from the impact of British life. First of all, he received a lasting impression of the importance of freedom in civic and, especially, in the spiritual life. Subsequently he became a crusader for freedom, and he recognized no other authority in the realm of the spirit than the Spirit of God. This must not be interpreted as „Schwärmerei“, for he was not a radical in the realm of morals or of civic life. But the authority for Christian preaching and doctrine must not be lodged in ecclesiastical authorities. It rightly belongs to the living congregation which is the realm of the Holy Spirit.

In England, Grundtvig also became tremendously impressed with the accomplishments of men in many realms of endeavor. He found a spirit of activity and accomplishment which convinced him of the great potentialities and actual achievement of man through the gift of created life. His historical studies informed him that the same emphasis upon freedom and the same spirit of accomplishment had existed in the ancient North, before the advent of Christianity, as evidenced in the ancient sagas and particularly in the ancient mythology of the North. This spirit had been there before the coming of Christianity, and this gave evidence to the fact that the power to live an active and useful life is not an exclusive prerogative of the redeemed life with God but is a result of the created life of man. Man therefore has a God-given privilege but also a God-given responsibility for developing his natural and created life to the limits of its potentialities.

What then about sin? What about the fall? For Grundtvig, sin was the great enemy and the great destroyer of life, and the fall was a tragic reality. He felt strongly the power of sin in his own members, and he was convinced of its destructive power throughout the history of the world. He never spoke of it in negative terms as the absence of good, and he regarded it as man's great enemy. For him the fall was more than an „aberration“; it was the victory of the power of death in the life of man from which man could not extricate himself. But the image of God, which man had been given in his creation by God, had not wholly been destroyed. Man was captive in the power

of sin, and he could not, absolutely not under any circumstances, bring about his own release, his own salvation, and the right relationship to God; but he did have an appreciation of God, and he could respond to the challenge of life. In fact, if he was to appreciate the significance of a life with God, he must work with all his might to build the best possible human living. Life with God is God's gift; sanctification comes by the power of the Holy Spirit and not through the effort of man. If man is to do anything, he must work with the materials and possibilities given him in his creation. The more he tends to this task, the more he becomes appreciative of the wonder of God's gift; the more he will long for it and pray for it. This is what lies behind Grundtvig's famous emphasis upon human living. Only God can restore me to life with Him through His forgiveness of my sins. What I can do is to bend myself to the tasks of the life given to me in creation. In this task the power which comes from the forgiveness of my sins is my Godgiven strength, but this power originates with God and for it I can claim no merit. What I can do is to live a noble and active life within the challenge of my tasks.

For Grundtvig the creation was an act of God, once and for all. The fall occurs continuously. This is in contrast to Luther for whom the fall was an event which had occurred once and for all and whose effect was operative on all men, but creation occurs continuously. God created life out of nothing („aus nichts“)<sup>5</sup>. Grundtvig emphasized that the redeemed man was the same man as the created man. Even as the son of the widow of Nain was the same man after his resurrection as he was before, and even as the resurrected Christ was the same Christ as had walked with the disciples in Galilee, so he who is given newness of life by God is the same man as was created by Him and given a living soul in his natural state.

From this emphasis upon human living came Grundtvig's emphasis upon civic and cultural activity, and out of it grew his educational ideas which resulted in the famous Folk Schools. Human living is not a despised and utterly corrupted life. It is a God-given life which is a wonderful gift to us and for which we have responsibility before God. Therefore, human activities are not to be shunned by the redeemed man nor to be condemned. Life is to be lived, to be made good and useful.

Anthropology, or a theological view of man, becomes very important when it becomes the foundation and the criterion for human activities. Europe has been critical of American "activism" during the past generation, but its criticism is not so much directed against

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in William Michelsen: *Tilblivelsen af Grundtvig's Historiesyn*, 1954.

American activity as against the theological anthropology which underlies it. In this matter of anthropology America is also to a large extent divided into two extremes. On the one hand we have the optimistic view of man, sometimes called the humanistic view, which credits man with the ability to surmount his difficulties, perhaps by the aid of the Holy Spirit—and which plays down the power of sin to be an environmental influence and a negation of the good, but without the positive strength of a real enemy. On the other hand we have the pessimistic view, sometimes called the Pietist view, which credits nothing at all to natural man. This view claims that man is so completely corrupted in sin by the Fall that there is nothing good within him. Furthermore, it can see nothing good in human activity under any circumstances except those which might legitimately, according to varying criteria, be called religious. Only when man is redeemed by the grace of God can he love his neighbor, and even then many human activities are to be shunned. In latter years, a neo-Pietistic attitude has developed which shuns former condemnation of human pleasures but which still does not recognize the legitimacy and goodness of any human activity that does not operate through acceptable religious forms or experiences.

There are, of course, many different views of man in America, and it would be wrong to fit them all into the Procrustean bed of these two extremes, but the extremes are not unrepresentative. As for those on middle ground, it is too often true that there is no articulate or well-defined anthropology that motivates and justifies what often is an excellent position. Americans do what they think should be done; they do it with tremendous energy and considerable effectiveness. When they have acted out of their impulses and in accord with their moral consciousness, they call their actions Christian. It is this identification of morally and spiritually motivated action with Christianity which makes it difficult for Europeans to understand and accept American "activism". There seems to be lacking a clear understanding of what is involved. The action is strong and good but the thinking of its motivation and justification is fuzzy. On the other hand Americans do not understand the European preoccupation with theology. What difference does it make whether we have all the theories in order, just so we get something done.

True to his European intellectual background, Grundtvig reacted strongly against the identification of Christianity with morally and socially motivated action. Christianity is a relation to God wherein God has forgiven man's sins and granted him the promise of eternal life, and no one has a right to present any action of his as Christian

or to claim that character for it. Nor does he have any right to call for action in the name of Christianity. On the other hand, Grundtvig did call strongly for action in national affairs, particularly in regard to education. He could not be a quietist, nor could he wash his hands of the affairs of the world and confine himself to an isolated concern for eternal verities. In these respects he was probably not so different from many others. But he differed in this respect—that he called for strong action on the basis of the privileges and responsibilities of created life. He did not claim for such action the status of the redeemed life, i. e., the newness of life given by the grace of God and God alone. On the other hand, he did not separate such action from the Christian and redeemed life. First of all, man has been endowed by his creator with a life which he must develop and for which he is responsible. This task he *can* do, and it is not unrelated to his life with God, for the more he enters into his human task, the more he will feel the need for and will appreciate the Christian life or the new and redeemed life with God. And secondly, the new life in a relationship of forgiveness of sin given by the grace of God, is not apart from or unrelated to the life of man created in the image of God; for from the power of forgiveness of sin comes the strength to live life as human beings in this world according to the purpose of God.

Grundtvig's ideas concerning these things have best been expressed in a poem which is not adequately translated into poetry but which can be literally translated as follows:

A simple, joyful, active life on earth  
Which I would not exchange for the life of kings,  
An exalted life in the tradition of the fathers  
With equal worth given to cottage and castle,  
With eyes turned heavenward, as in our birth,  
Alert to all that is good and beautiful,  
But well acquainted with the deep longings  
And only perfected by the glory of eternity,  
Such a life I desired for all my loved ones  
And strove diligently to prepare,  
And when my soul grew tired of the struggle,  
It found rest in the prayer of our Lord;  
Then I felt comfort of the Spirit of Truth,  
That blessings abound in the vineyard of life,  
When dust is given into the hands of the creator  
And we await the natural course of events.

WALTER FREYTAG

## The Lesson of North African Church History

Looking at the beginnings of Christian history in Africa, we are faced with a puzzling question. During the first few centuries of the Christian era, northern Africa had been one of the foremost areas of Christendom with regard to the spiritual life of its churches and to their missionary outreach. Only a few centuries later, Christianity was largely extinct in this same area. Even where it continued to vegetate, it had no missionary significance and remained without any. How did this come about?

Time and again this question has stirred the hearts and minds of individual observers; for who can pass by the fact that churches living under the promise of our Lord can simply disappear? This question assumes increasing significance today, within a different frame of reference. A growing number of voices tends to compare the present situation, the menace of far-reaching revolution spreading from Asia also into Africa, to what happened in those early days of Christian history under the attack of Islam. There are good reasons for comparing the situations then and now, not merely because of the outward range of events, but even more because of their inner relationship. In both cases we are faced with the rise of a post-Christian political religion: post-Christian in the sense that the Christian message and its fruits are regarded as yesterday's message and yesterday's conditions; political in the sense that, as with Islam, the religions of today are molded and receive their structure through the principalities and powers of this world. The hour of temptation facing Asia and Africa today bears an inner relationship to the events which led to the breakdown of the Church in Africa. Involuntarily, our thoughts travel back, and the question arises: can we learn something from what happened then to clarify our task today? To do so, of course, we must briefly call to mind the picture of that early African Christianity.

Christianity in Africa had two vantage-points: the cities of Alexandria and Carthage, whence it was able to spread into their wide hinterlands, Egypt and Africa Proconsularis.

Let us first consider the influence deriving from Alexandria. Here, there existed a sizeable Greek-speaking colony of Jews, of considerable intellectual level, which was presumably the first object of Christian missions. The name of Apollos, a missionary from Alexandria, is mentioned already in Acts. We may gather from this that missionary enterprise had begun there even in these early days. In the beginning of the second century there were two schools for catechists in Alexandria—the first theological seminary—and before the year 190 we come upon Demetrius, the first Bishop of Alexandria. By the end of the second century, there were large groups of Christians including many members of the propertied classes, particularly in this Delta area; but by this time the first congregations existed among the indigenous Egyptian peasants, as well. These so-called Copts were mostly subject to Graeco-Roman landlords and accepted Christianity often in contrast to their feudal lords who remained pagan. From the beginning, Coptic Christianity bore unmistakable marks of its Egyptian origin. Thus when the great mass of the Copts came into the Church about the year 300, they maintained the Egyptian's characteristic attitude: his feeling of transcendence—to which, as well as to his cult of the dead, the pyramids still stand as a mighty witness—found expression in indulgence in apocalyptic fantasies which flourished rampantly, and in the emphasis laid on the cult of martyrs and saints. That the Church did not sufficiently guard against this may have been due to the attitude towards Egypt then generally prevalent. With her worship of animals, Egypt was counted as the pagan country *par excellence*, and the main attention, naturally, was thus given to the abolition of idolatry. Christianity had, no doubt, been reinforced by the existence, as early as 350, of sections of the Bible in three different Coptic dialects.

## I

Two important features of Egyptian Christendom deserve special attention: first, it always possessed strong *hierarchical organization*. The severe persecutions under Septimius Severus and Decius had been particularly fierce in Egypt. Many believers were taken to Alexandria to die a martyr's death. Naturally, there was also much apostasy; in due course the issue of readmitting the apostates became crucial and gave rise to the canonical regulation of penitence. The bishops took control of church discipline and thereby laid the foundation of their power. They followed the leadership of the Bishop of

Alexandria, the later Patriarch. This bishopric was occupied by a number of men like Athanasius who played an important part in successive controversies. They even knew how to use such disputes to strengthen their own hierarchic power and influence within the Church at large, in their struggle with the Patriarchs of Rome and Byzantium. This eventually led to their downfall when they opposed the Occident in the so-called monophysite controversy, maintaining that in Christ the divine and human natures were not inseparably united, but that the human nature was absorbed into the divine. For the sake of the Church's Unity, the Emperor wanted to help the western view to victory by force and deposed the patriarch; later there were compromises. But since Egyptian Christians, led by their monks, kept strictly to their original theology, the Patriarch ever found himself between two parties—now inclining towards the one, then to the other. — In the meantime Egyptian Christendom drifted out of the Imperial Roman Church.

The second important feature of Egyptian Christianity is the fact that it gave birth to *monastic life*. At first there were only solitary eremites, Anthony probably being the first. Soon, colonies of eremites came into being; Pachomius was the first to establish a monastery (323) and to unite the monks by exercises of common penance, by the same dress, by common work and meals, and under the vow of chastity. At times, the monastic movement was so powerful that steps had to be taken to prevent too many people leaving their civic tasks. Committed and great minds gathered by the thousands in the monasteries. Monasticism had immense influence: it represented Egyptian national and strictly monophysite Christianity, and occasionally—by physical force, cudgel in hand and supported by the rabble — it actually compelled the Patriarch in Alexandria to take an anti-occidental stand in dogmatic controversies, against his own will.

Moreover, the monks were the agents of missionary outreach into the areas further south. Flourishing Nubia, the northern border of which was at present-day Assuan, with its capital city of Dongola, was christianized about the year 500; it even acquired a Christian literature, thanks to the monks. Indeed, they carried Christianity as far south as Ethiopia. This African kingdom with its capital at Alboa was won in its entirety—and Abyssinia, too, was integrated into the ecclesiastical organization of Alexandria.

The second sphere of Christian influence centered at Carthage. From there, the three ancient provinces of Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, and Mauretania—our modern Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco—were permeated by the Christian message. The aboriginals of these

countries, the Berbers, had been subdued by Phoenician invaders and pushed back into the mountain areas. But the Phoenicians or Punians had become a mere middle class through the influx of Roman immigrants after the Roman conquest in the second century before Christ. We do not know when Christianity came to Carthage. Certainly the world-famous commercial center with its Jewish congregation must have been an early object of Christian missionary enterprise. The earliest evidence is of two martyrs about 180 A. D. As early as 200 there was a synod of seventy African and ninety Numidian bishops. About the year 300 the number had increased to two hundred and, a century later, to five hundred bishops. Together with that of Asia Minor, this rapidly growing Christian community was the most flourishing of the ancient world. But it, too, had to undergo severe persecutions. Tertullian's saying that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" was spoken in Africa. There was much martyrdom, though rarely at first among the clergy, but also much apostasy. The persecution by the Arian Vandals, who oppressed local Catholic Christians for a century after 429 A. D., was a difficult period but failed to destroy the community despite many executions and other acts of violence. In 531 Carthage was incorporated into the Byzantine Empire by Belisarius, as Egypt had been, earlier. This event brought to an end the influx of Roman immigrants which had continuously reinforced the Christian element.

Carthaginian Christianity may best be described in the following way: originating in the cities, it made its first headway especially among the urban population, officials and soldiery. The second decisive element, here again, was episcopal power, which, as in Egypt, was based on the procedure for readmitting those who had denied their faith during the time of persecution. Its third feature was a tendency towards severity which seems to characterize African Christianity. The broad movement of the Donatists—so named for their founder—denied the validity of sacraments administered by clergy who had betrayed the Holy Scriptures under persecution. They were so strict in matters of dogma that they considered rebaptism necessary wherever Christians had been baptized by clergy of a different persuasion.

Here too, we can clearly discern a distinctively African nationalistic background to the dogmatic controversy which was directed against the Imperial Church of the Caesars as a State Church. In the end, the Donatists were overcome by Augustine, and thereby was established the thesis that the holiness of the church does not depend upon the personal holiness of her ministers, but upon the holiness of her ministry.

In North Africa, too, monasticism flourished. Augustine supported it, and it achieved great power. The African Church produced three of the most eminent minds of church history: Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. The first provided the West with the basic outline of dogmatics; the second laid the foundation for the Western concept of the Church; the third, Augustine, was the most fertile and effective intellect of the Ancient Church. The later Roman Catholic Church would be unthinkable but for these three great African theologians.

## II

This Christian community in all of North Africa—in Egypt alone it far exceeded a million members as early as 400 A. D.—has all but disappeared. Only a few remnants exist today. To explain its breakdown, it is not sufficient just to point to the triumphant invasion of Bedouins who poured into the North African area shortly after Mohammed's death, taking Alexandria in 641 A. D. and Carthage in 695. This mighty assault will not serve to explain the breakdown of Christianity, simply because the Mohammedans by no means converted at sword point everybody they met on their way. Certainly there was periodic suppression, but the general policy of Islam towards Christianity was one of preservation. We know that Christian groups under Islamic sovereignty were taxed—a tax not paid by Muslims, taking about one third of the annual income. It is also evident that the Islamic political system curtailed active church life in that it did not permit any missionary activity, did not allow any public witness, not even the display of the cross, and prohibited the building of new churches. These mandates were, however, not immediately executed, otherwise it would not have been necessary after a century, in Egypt, for instance, to organize the large-scale destruction of newly built churches. Yet the pressure was hard. Nevertheless we should ask ourselves whether it is true, as is frequently asserted, that the main reason for the wide-spread apostasy may be found in the effort to avoid the tax burden by turning Muslim. For it cannot be denied that the African churches had a particularly glorious history of martyrdom, which means that the idea of testifying even at the risk of life itself was alive among them. Could it have disappeared completely later on, while only the Jews maintained such a spirit of sacrifice? Or why did the latter survive in North Africa while the churches disappeared?

As far as we can see, the reasons for the Church's breakdown are different in the two areas. — Considering North Africa first, we can

clearly discern that here Christianity has a distinctly urban character. The original population, the Berbers, had received only very superficial Christian varnish which, at the time of the Muslim invasion, was generally replaced by an equally superficial Moslem varnish. They were, in fact, involved in the process of Islamization chiefly by being engaged as helpers by the Muslim leadership. They became satellites: the troops who undertook the first assault against Spain were mostly such Berbers.

Of the second population group, the Phoenicians or Punians, the vast majority were Christian. However, in some sense they were second-class Christians because, strangely enough, they had no Christian literature in their mother tongue, not even the Bible. Admittedly, Augustine insisted that the clergy should be able to speak the Punic language besides Latin. But he himself preached to the Punians through an interpreter, and his order was rarely observed since the clergy was mostly Roman. Thus the faith of the Punians soon disintegrated under Islamic pressure. It had not taken root in the soul of this section of the population; it had remained something alien to their speech.

The Graeco-Roman landowners, Christians in North Africa, lost their wealth and property to the Mohammedans. Immigration of Roman colonists had ended when the area became part of the East-Roman empire; now many of the former landowners emigrated.—The considerable Jewish community, the smallest section of the population, was tolerated by the Muslims for the sake of its faith and survives even today.

The position in Egypt was fundamentally different. The majority of the Christians, the Copts, were opposed to the class of Greek landowners. At the time of the Muslim invasion this latter group, together with the Patriarch of Alexandria, supported the Church of the Roman Emperor in contrast to the Monophysite majority. The Copts on their part made sure of Muslim assistance against the Greeks and the Patriarch, bringing about the destruction of this Orthodox class. But soon the Copts themselves were also severely oppressed. Those they had regarded as liberators in the beginning turned out to be the real enemy. The heavy tax burden demoralized the Copts, the clergy became corrupt, and the sale of church offices which means the death of spiritual life became increasingly widespread. Thus this Christendom degenerated.

Nubia maintained herself longer. The narrow gateway of the Nile valley protected her for a long time. As late as the middle of the eighth century, a group of Christian Nubians released the captive

Patriarch of Alexandria by force of arms. Even in the eleventh century a Nubian delegation was able to better the situation of the Coptic clergy, and early in the twelfth century Christian pilgrims from Nubia were not admitted to the holy places of Jerusalem by the crusaders who regarded them as heretics. Nevertheless, in Nubia also Christianity collapsed. The outward cause was a quarrel about the succession to the throne, in the course of which the illegitimate candidate called the Moslems into the country. But the true reason for the breakdown was different: there had never been a Nubian hierarchy. Coptic priests and monks provided the country's spiritual care; their recruitment depended entirely upon Alexandria. Therefore the decay of the Coptic church necessarily had its consequences for the Nubian church. Still in the sixteenth century, a Portuguese Pater travelling through Nubia reported a people who wanted to be Christian and could not be, for lack of priests. Today the Nubians do not remember their Christian past beyond binding amulets with the sign of the cross to their wives' foreheads and baptizing their children on the banks of the Nile in order to dispose the water spirits favorably.

What was then Ethiopia survived somewhat longer still but was finally submerged in Islam and lost her Christian faith, presumably for the same reason as did Nubia. Only Abyssinia, protected by mountains, maintained her freedom against Mohammedanism. But there too, Christianity suffered for want of native clergy.

### III

When we ask what is to be learned from this deeply moving portion of church history, one thing may be stated at the outset: Whether or not the hour of temptation will come over Africa lies in God's hand, and no one can avert it if He does send it. That at such an hour human beings will fail and stumble can be prevented by no one but God alone. But it does lie in our hands to strengthen African Christianity as long as we are given time to do so. And what is decisive in this matter? Five points emerge from what we have observed just now—not equally important in all places, but of significance for each particular area:

1. In North Africa, Christianity had largely remained urban. It did not include the whole population; we saw that it had hardly touched the Berbers. There were no sermons nor any literature in their own language, and we have seen that Mohammedanism gained its first stronghold and especially firm footing with just these, the neglected, the suppressed, the slighted.

Still today, urban mission is in the foreground in Africa. Admittedly, considerable efforts have been made to reach the rural population. But has this really been accomplished to a sufficient extent?

2. The Punian section of the North African population had no Christian literature and no Bible of their own.

We should not minimize the excellent work already done, and still being done, in translating the Bible into African languages; and yet we must acknowledge the lack of Christian literature in the vernacular as one of the greatest needs of missions in Africa today.

3. In Nubia and Ethiopia there was no indigenous clergy; strictly speaking, it died away, because there was no native hierarchy.

In this respect our missions today are more awake. But what is the good of studying the training of a ministry for Africa if the recruiting problem remains unsolved and if our seminaries and training centers stand deserted? Have we evolved the type of ministry which will serve under local conditions?

4. The fourth significant circumstance was this: the churches obviously lacked ties to and communication with the universal Church. The African Church was everywhere disrupted by confessional disputes. And in many places such controversies clearly were the occasion for the enemy's intrusion. We should pay special attention to these two facts. With the Copts in Egypt, doctrinal differences opened the path by which a nationalistic point of view defeated Christian solidarity with the Orthodox Greeks. For nationalistic reasons the Copts became traitors to their Christian brethren. In all of North Africa and Egypt this involvement in doctrinal dispute was undoubtedly the reason why the enemy was not identified in time. Eyes were turned upon the Christian opponent and thus could not identify the enemy of all Christendom.

Here we are faced with a serious problem which is not easily solved but which we must not forget. It corresponds to the question: To what extent is the unsolved problem of church unity the reason for Christian neglect of the Communist danger in Asia and Africa?

5. All these factors may be summed up in one brief sentence: The truth of the Gospel has to be made manifest in the African's conscience. Those of us who were at Evanston will remember with concern and deep shock what African Christians such as Rev. Dagadu and Mrs. Karefa-Smart said there. All the positive things said about missions at that time could not hide the staggering accusation in their words—the accusation: "You do not take us seriously!" We realized how profoundly they feel the superiority complex of the old churches. "By your feeling of superiority you crucify Christ day after day. Why

don't you give us our full share of responsibility? Why do your churches remain foreign? You gave us a negative Christianity which tells us what we must not do but which gives no guidance to the area where our life has its fundamental strength, the community of the group. Why can't you come to terms with each other? We have to pay for your disunity."—If even people who have many ecumenical contacts and experience much kindness speak like this—how deep-rooted must this feeling of not-being-taken-seriously be with the others!

All the concerns we have mentioned must be seen in this context. We must scrutinize our work over and over again, asking whether in our fateful and ominous combination of missionary enterprise with expansion of Western civilization we do not leave the majority of Africans untouched in their souls. Conscience speaks in the mother tongue; and even the best English which Africans may learn at our schools neither is, nor will become their mother tongue. Not even the most highly trained pastors whom we have molded in our own image will really strengthen African Christendom unless we are able to show the way towards genuinely African pastoral care.

The feeling of not-being-understood in the very depth of their souls is what prevents African Christians from living within the ecumenical community. It is what, in the hour of temptation—be it nationalist or communist—deprives them of the fount of strength which any church in such an hour may find in her consciousness of being a member of the one whole body of Christ. You cannot be concerned about this, you cannot recall the breakdown of ancient Christianity in North Africa, without feeling compelled to ask anew whether we are on the right road and to pray that God may lead us on His way.

H. W. GENSICHEN

## The Church of South India

### I

"We shall never have a united Christendom unless we can build a model to convince the world of its practicability. Ours is the privilege in South India to make such a demonstration." These words, written by one of her pioneers 12 years before the Church of South India (CSI) was formed (Sundkler<sup>1</sup>, p. 408), proved doubly prophetic. They were clearly fulfilled on that day in September 1947 when the Union was solemnly inaugurated in St. George's Cathedral, Madras. But they were also fulfilled in that they provided the interpretation in the light of which the CSI is generally viewed nowadays.

Without any doubt, the CSI is the one great test case of union between different types of churches. Unquestionably, it is unique inasmuch as here the episcopal and the non-episcopal types were joined for the first time. The relationship of these two forms, still one of the weightiest ecumenical problems at Amsterdam in 1948, has found a practical adjustment in the CSI. Its significance as a precedent can hardly be overestimated. But how about the more far-reaching aim to present the CSI simply as "a model of united Christendom"? This claim may not be overlooked. It is present throughout the history of the CSI's formation, and it runs like a red thread through the account of the first five years of the united Church as it has been presented by A. M. Ward, one of the Church's leading theologians<sup>2</sup>. Whatever your attitude towards this claim—it does ask a question not only of the CSI herself, but also of all other churches, and not only those of India.

Up to now it has not been easy to deal with this question. Not that there has been any lack of material on the CSI; the carefully prepared bibliography of Sundkler's book lists well over 200 titles. But hitherto we seem to have had only two types of approach: either apology or criticism, even though in either case they were frequently

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<sup>1</sup> Bengt Sundkler, *The Church of South India: The movement towards union 1900-1947*, Lutterworth Press: London, 1954, 457 pp.

<sup>2</sup> A. Marcus Ward, *The Pilgrim Church: An account of the first five years in the life of the Church of South India*, The Epworth Press: London, 1953, 216 pp.

written in the endeavor to defend or to admonish, *sine ira et studio*. What was lacking, nevertheless, was a factual and conscientious account of what actually did exist and occur prior to 1947 and of what actually exists today.

The latter and surely easier task has benefited from the fact that it was undertaken by a man who is actively and closely linked to the life of the CSI as theological teacher and counselor. One will gladly make allowances for the apologetic note which is understandably present. But it is of even greater importance that the former and far more difficult task found an author directed exclusively by an incorruptible sense for facts, a critical knowledge of the source-material and, at the same time, by profound insight into the significance of the frequently highly confused events. Professor B. Sundkler, onetime missionary in South Africa, later study secretary of the International Missionary Council, is now church and mission historian at Uppsala University. He had earlier proved himself a competent judge and reporter of events in the domain of the Younger Churches by his analysis of South Africa's Bantu sects (*Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London, 1948). You could not wish for a better historian of the CSI. His account merely profits from the fact that Sundkler, as a Lutheran, belongs to a church not directly involved in the CSI, especially since not a trace of distinctly Lutheran prejudice or judgment can be found even despite a determined search. At the same time, his book is far removed from any tedious and superficial pragmatism. As he points out in his introduction, his eye is on the One Catholic Church. This, and the manner in which he maintains this view-point without becoming disloyal to his task as a historian, turns his presentation into an ecumenical achievement of high order.

The truly unique importance of the book, however, is found in the range of its source-material. Dr. J. J. Banninga, who held a key-position in the negotiations towards union after 1920, placed all his files and his correspondence at the author's disposal and thus created a groundwork which any historian would envy. To this must be added extensive studies of archives in Europe and India as well as written and oral information. Thus every page of the book lets you feel how it was drawn from the richest abundance of first-hand sources—not least the 170 pages of notes.

I can only sketchily indicate here what the author has created from his material, how he has ordered and structured his vast subject matter. The grand stages in the evolution of the CSI are thrown into bold relief. The Anglo-American revival movement, the Anglo-

Catholic as well as the Evangelical wing of Anglicanism, the tendencies towards unification appear, as it were, as stage-settings for the events to come. Before this backdrop is outlined, first of all, the merger of Presbyterians and Congregationalists into the South India United Church (SIUC, 1908), joined in 1919 by the Malabar district of the Basle Mission. The parallel in the Anglican camp is a narrowing of the gap between the two main wings under the pressure of the evangelistic task. The International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910, provided new and lasting impulses towards closer co-operation of churches and missions. In India, these were taken up and passed on by a whole series of conferences under the growing conviction that one must pass beyond mere co-operation on to full union.

Under such circumstances, it is only natural that existing differences and the weight of occidental historical development should at first become all the more perceptible. The issue of the ministry begins to emerge as the most urgent problem. How is the Anglican principle of apostolic succession to be brought into harmony with the Free-Church principle of spiritual equality? By 1919, in Tranquebar, the old Lutheran center and place of origin of Protestant mission in India, the solution is seen in the direction of a synthesis of the three "biblical elements" of all church order: the congregational, the presbyterian, and the episcopal. The Scriptures, the ancient creeds, the Sacraments, and the historic episcopal office (without special theoretical determination) are to be the basis of union. It is a truly historic conference, on historic ground. Indians dominate the scene, led by Bishop Azariah of Dornakal. Their thirty-one representatives are matched by only two missionaries, though one of these is the tireless and influential Sherwood Eddy who ceaselessly repeats the *argumentum ad Indos*: "America, England and other lands are praying, talking, discussing and desiring such a union. India alone can act" (p. 107).

Action now proceeds on the level of official inter-church discussion. The union committee established by the Anglicans and the SIUC convenes for its first session in 1920. Outstanding among the Anglicans, next to Azariah, is, for many years, Bishop Palmer of Bombay, "the main architect of the Church of South India" (p. 115); among the SIUC's representatives they are J. J. Banninga, skilfully mediating American, and H. Sumitra, the present Moderator of the CSI. After 1925, the Methodists make a third partner in the committee. The Danish mission, originally not averse to participation, finally does hold back, as do all other Lutherans. The scheme for

union gets a boost in 1927 when the "Church of England in India" becomes the disestablished Anglican "Church of India, Burma and Ceylon". It is also the Anglicans who advance the fundamental issue of church order towards a solution by proposing a transitional period of thirty (originally fifty) years for integrating the free-church order into the episcopal order of the ministry.

A Methodist proposal, the Pledge, gave assurance that nothing was to be ordered in the united Church that might violate a partner's conscience or might hinder growth into complete unity. Both suggestions are included in the first draft of a scheme of church union in 1929 which is followed by ever newly revised editions. Both are typical of a feature which becomes characteristic of the whole development of the CSI: The Union is presented not so much as a completed situation as, on the contrary, a process of growing-together which should leave room for the exception beside the rule. The future united Church is visualized by her planners as a "church-to-be" rather than as a "church-that-has-become". That is the deeper meaning of the principle of "Catholic comprehensiveness" which was able to unite partners as different as Anglicans and the SIUC.

However, the road towards achievement was still long and difficult. Negotiations over the power of bishops, parity of the ministries of the partner churches, ordination for office in the united church, and intercommunion halted again and again. New factors continuously demanded attention. There is Church history: Is the Union to be "a new church in ancient India" or "the ancient church in new India" (p. 257)? Should she be a church of the second or of the fourth century? There are the burdens of western tradition, embodied in European and American church and mission boards: more than once the Indians were impatient under the impression that purely Western problems were being forced upon them. There are finally, in the years after 1936, the energetic attempts of a small group to help the *Sola Scriptura* of the Reformation to prominence once again.

In the early forties, the seventh and final version of the scheme for union was presented to the different churches for final decision. The Methodists approved almost unanimously; so did the Anglicans in 1945, despite heavy Anglo-Catholic pressure. The SIUC finally followed suit in 1946, though without one of their most strongly Congregationalist districts which did not join the CSI until 1950. Thus the road towards union was cleared. Sundkler rightly stresses that today the CSI must be evaluated primarily as an established fact, in contrast to all schemes for union which are found only on

paper for the time being. She should therefore be judged not so much by her history as by her life. And here we have reached the point where Sundkler may yield the floor to Ward. However, Sundkler's book opens up such a host of lasting, valuable insights into the general problems of church union that we must call special attention to a few further points.

## II

First of all we must mention the influence of Indian *environment*. On the one hand, the evolution of the CSI was undoubtedly aided by growing Indian *nationalism*. This became clear as early as the Tranquebar Conference in 1919. H. Sumitra spoke for many others when he said in 1942: "Left to themselves, Indians would have united long ago" (p. 207). At any rate, all the pioneers of union were well aware that the united Church must first and foremost be an Indian Church, even though a vision of the evangelistic possibilities may have outweighed the influence of the nationalist Swaraj-movement with some. This vision, at any rate, helped some of the fighters for union to a regular conversion experience. Thus Sundkler reports that Bishop Whitehead, for instance, joined the "evangelical" group, turning away from tractarianism, and that the Congregationalist G. E. Phillips came to an almost "catholic" position—and in both cases the bridging of the gap must apparently be credited to the influence of the special situation in India. The whole history of the CSI proves that in this special situation the will towards union developed with a speed and an intensity which, at times, appeared almost uncanny to the Western churches.

But these matters are too complex to allow the conclusion, whether in approval or disapproval, that there was an almost organic connection between nationalism and unionism. Sundkler cites remarkable examples to show that just the radical nationalistic Christian groups rejected the union because it was patterned far too much along Western lines (pp. 143, 204, f.). And one leading Indian layman even voiced a warning against including the historic episcopate in the union precisely because it was too much in accordance with the genius of India (p. 133)! The tensions between West and East, between Mission and Young Church, cannot apparently be equated with those between confessionism and union, as is done so often nowadays. Desire for union therefore is not necessarily proof in itself of sensitivity concerning the environment of a Young Church.

*Caste* was a further local factor which became significant in the growth of the CSI. But about this, barely anything can be found in Sundkler's book, since such matters, naturally, are rarely put into records. It is true that Bishop Whitehead has occasion (1913) to refer to the episcopal office as the sole effective "safeguard against caste churches" (p. 69). But otherwise this ticklish problem was hushed up rather than discussed. Let us, in any case, supplement Sundkler's report by the oral report of an impartial observer who witnessed the Tranquebar Conference of 1919. He could not resist the impression that the fight against confessionalism drew attention away from the struggle against caste in the Indian churches.

What we can learn about the significance of *tradition* and *church history* in Sundkler's book is more important. All the struggle for union was, indeed, at times strife about certain historic forms of church order. That, of course, is why those learned in patristics were frequently able to make a solid contribution. Both Anglicans and Free Churchmen looked to the first centuries for the model of the new church. The one question was: to which century—that of Ignatius or that of Cyprian? On the other hand, a leading Indian commented: "I have no use at all for history" (p. 181), and one may well sympathize with this sigh of sorrow. In the midst of this debate among specialists, surging back and forth between the studies of English scholars and India, it is, at least, refreshing to find A. Steck-eisen from Basle venture into the arena with the Reformation's *Sola Scriptura*. With this, of course, he consciously bursts the frame of the scholarly historical discussion. For he does not seek to pit one historical argument against another but, rather, Holy Scripture against Vincent of Lerins (p. 182), the Reformation's Gospel against "comprehensiveness".

This leads directly into the much debated question of the significance of *doctrine*. It has often been noticed that "questions of faith caused no prolonged difficulties" in the development of the CSI. (R. Rouse & S. Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, London & Philadelphia, 1954, p. 474). Even when you consider that, at least for Anglicans, the problems of the ministry are not merely problems of church order, you will find much that is justifiable in the comment that "there was no protracted discussion as to whether the church ought to be holy, and hold the apostolic faith, and prosecute the apostolic mission. The question of visible continuity dominated the negotiations, and the decision on it determined the issue" (W. E. Garrison in *The Christian Century*, June 30, 1954, p. 793. cf. Sundkler, p. 173).

Even prior to the establishment of the SIUC (1908), a Congregationalist voiced the concern which ever after keeps returning: "We ought to save the infant Churches of India from the swaddling bands (i. e. creeds and confessions) which tend to become too tight for lusty youth" (p. 355). Equally characteristic is what Anglican Bishop Tubbs, a zealous advocate of union, has to say in 1926 about the Reformation: "Instead of unity, the Reformation substituted division, instead of variety, uniformity, instead of missionary adventure, missionary stagnation" (p. 383). Palmer, too, regarded the confessions of the Reformation as "devisive and out of balance" (p. 174). It is true that he does compare the situation of the churches in India with the period of anti-gnostic struggles in the Ancient Church, and it is just because of this that he wants to return beyond the "chaotic assortment of different and often mutually inconsistent opinions" which he sees in the churches after the time of the Reformation, to "the relative clearness and simplicity of the latter part of the third, fourth and fifth centuries" (p. 180). But it is apparent that he is concerned about the episcopal order rather than about doctrine. It seems that doctrine is of significance to him only to the extent that it is guaranteed by bishops (p. 255).

Reaction did not fail to appear. Sundkler devotes a special chapter to it which covers the years 1937—1939 and is entitled "Pressures of the Reformation". This period was, indeed, characterized by Steck-eisen's courageous attack which has already been mentioned. (Besides Karl Barth, Karl Hartenstein also supported him). Only the direct return to the Bible would, in Steck-eisen's opinion, protect the future union from the dangers of Indian syncretism. The much-praised elasticity of "catholic comprehensiveness" is not an aid but, rather, a danger to the Church. In 1938 there is actually a successful attempt to include an altered declaration on the faith of the church, containing clear scriptural principle and a trinitarian credal statement, in the scheme for union. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed continue to be cited as a witness to, and protection for, biblical faith. But the liberal Congregationalists in the SIUC, united with Steck-eisen in an alliance of convenience against Anglican emphasis on tradition, without understanding anything of his actual concern, had made sure that individualistic neo-protestantism was not the loser: a footnote guarantees individual liberty of interpretation of the Creeds and stresses that no one is thinking of asserting "that those Creeds are a complete expression of the Christian faith" (p. 280). Steck-eisen must have felt deeply the internal anomaly of this whole doctrinal statement, just as the spontaneous sympathy of the liberals

was surely no pure joy to him. One may ask oneself whether this was not inevitable. Steckelsen's battle for Scripture as the sole criterion was necessary and important. But the sudden support from that other camp might have shown him that biblicism which totally disregards the Church was doomed to be no less dissatisfying than the attempts to base the faith of the Church on ancient church tradition. Even such biblicism cannot avoid the question of interpretation. Palmer sensed this, as did the English Congregationalist C. B. Firth who, influenced by Emil Brunner, declared: "Not the Bible by itself but the Bible in the Church is our ultimate standard" (p. 282).

Can it be said that in all this episode the evolving CSI was ever really confronted with the message of the Reformation? Anyone wishing to answer this question should not forget that that doctrinal statement and its footnote are still found in the constitution of the CSI (*Constitution of the CSI*, Madras, 1952, p. 72). Is it possible that much might have been different had the Lutheran churches and missions participated in the discussions of union? Sundkler's account may raise the question why Lutherans in South India appear to exist on the fringe of great events without themselves being seriously touched by them. Three things should be considered before you speak of the sinful omissions of a self-satisfied Lutheran Confessionalism: The Lutheran missions were by far the hardest-hit by the consequences of the first World War and had their hands full trying to rebuild their work in some fashion. They would necessarily feel less at home in the specifically Anglo-Saxon climate of the union negotiations. Finally, Sundkler tells you almost nothing about their actual reaction. It might perhaps be a worth-while task to examine Scandinavian and German journals of the period between the wars for comments on the schemes for union. One thing is certain: serious confrontation of CSI and Lutherans did not get under way until 1947 (see Gensichen in *Evangelische Missionszeitschrift*, 1954, pp. 75—84, 102—108). But this already leads into the history of the first five years of the CSI.

### III

A different atmosphere breathes through Mr. Ward's book than through Sundkler's. As is only natural, he does not merely register and report, he also evaluates and defends. For instance, you would hardly find in Sundkler an assertion quite like the one that in India "historical denominational differences had no meaning but, rather,

hindered the spread of the Gospel" (p. 8). Pride in achievement appears even in the title ("*The Pilgrim Church*"), pervades the whole book. The significance of the CSI is expressly rated more highly than that of the World Council of Churches, for the former declares: "We intend to go forward together", while the latter, according to Ward, limits itself to the slogan: "We intend to stay together" (p. 191). Other schemes for union will have to face comparison with the CSI in order to establish their value or worthlessness (p. 78). Even more do the still separated churches have to vindicate themselves in the face of the CSI, for it is not the union but the continuation of separation which demands justification (p. 51). Essentially, there is nothing left to do but to follow the CSI or to demonstrate a better method of unification (p. 194), simply because the South Indian union is an act of obedience approved by God (p. 130), indeed, because in its innermost essence it is God's tangible reward for the obedience of men (pp. 51, f.).

This, and other testimony to a strong and sure conviction which determines the whole study, somewhat strains the author's contention that "this book sets out to be a statement of facts rather than an appraisal of values" (136). Yet one will gladly concede that Ward is not concerned with human glory (p. 51). What may obtrude at times as irritating partisanship must be understood from the point of view which aches to pass on to others and recommend to them the great experiences which God has granted the CSI. Only this will also explain why the account discusses, with as much affection as monotony, such achievements as are found in other, non-united churches at least to the extent as in the CSI, e. g. laymen's service and women's work. We shall never do justice to the CSI as long as we regard it as an accumulation of different traditions and compare it to the condition of the divided partners before union, even though Ward himself again and again turns to this theory of addition. In any case, the divided heritage has become something new and whole in the CSI, something which obeys its own, new laws.

This becomes impressively apparent in the chapter on the CSI as a missionizing church. Not by chance does it fill the opening spot. "South India is learning anew that the thing which makes a church *the Church* is that which gives it its mission" (p. 183). The fact that this church has recognized and tackled her evangelistic task at home and abroad (New Guinea) and the manner in which she has carried it out, are surely the best sign of the internal vitality of the Union. The much quoted thesis, repeated by Ward, that only the witness of a united Church can make the world listen (p. 13), is, however, not

fully corroborated by the study itself: The Church's Board of Missions, itself, sees the danger that the union may lose something of the missionary zeal inherent in the earlier loyalty to a specific denomination (p. 22).

Yet even such worries can never for a moment shake the CSI's certainty that through union it has followed the only possible and correct way. This is to be true also beyond the borders of South India; for here, too, the CSI feels strong missionary responsibility. Her relationship with the still divided parent churches of the West, notably with the Anglican Church, have not yet been satisfactorily arranged. Chapter II deals with this. The CSI is of the opinion that they cannot and must not be arranged in any way other than that the Western churches on their part should follow the road of the CSI (pp. 51, f.). It is no different at home in South India: The CSI wishes and has to bring those to her path who still retain their distance from the union, if she is to be true to her claim to be not merely a new denomination but a decisive step in the healing of the wounds of the whole Body of Christ (pp. 70, f.).

This is the viewpoint from which the relationship to Lutherans and Baptists is hopefully considered, though the latter have not participated in the joint discussion since 1950. Chapter III, by the way, gives an excellent account of these. One of Ward's assertions deserves special interest, particularly in the light of what Sundkler says on the issue of doctrine in the emerging CSI: "The initial contention of the Lutherans that any union with them must be on a theological basis has been whole-heartedly accepted (by the CSI), and the problem of giving effect to it is proving a valuable means of theological education for the whole Church" (p. 70). Whether Ward here does indeed speak for all the CSI is yet to be shown in the future discussions with the Lutherans.

The next chapters describe the life of the CSI in various areas—the ordained ministry, the ministries of the laity and of women, liturgy, theology — and they provide an abundance of well documented material. They are especially illuminating if, impelled by Sundkler, we ask: How does the CSI realize its basic principle to solve certain open questions not before, but after merger, in the practice of communal life? We cannot here give details of the progress which Ward reports in this area. Beyond doubt, the growing-together of the various traditions stimulates the total life of the Church in many ways. The chapter on worship, especially, documents this impressively. It is no less apparent that some old questions remain open and that new issues also arise. The concept of the

episcopal office, for instance, continues to show a certain vacillation: On the one hand, there is a desire for "something sacramental" in the office of a bishop, beyond mere considerations of expediency; on the other, one still avoids a doctrinal definition of the historical episcopate as it is to be valid in the Church (p. 76). A similar dichotomy appears in the chapter on the theology of the Church, the shortest one in the volume. On the one hand is the desire to follow completely the guidance of the Spirit who will ever "lead the people into a common mind, for that means the truth" (p. 156). On the other hand, the whole chapter shows clearly that even the CSI will not be able to do without precise norms of scriptural interpretation and proclamation, for instance in their confrontation by the Pentecostals (pp. 150, f.).

Finally, we should point to the Church's own understanding of herself as a union church (Chapter X). Ward repeatedly acknowledges the character of the union as a "grand addition", specifically in the sense that in the union "there is room for *all* the elements which once were held to be the ground of separation" (p. 181). The CSI has, indeed, in many respects already given an exemplary example of what unity without uniformity may mean. At the same time, the united church was and intended to be also something utterly new in which the old was to die. Ward's attempt to grant a place, even within the union, to loyalty to an old heritage may strike you as a sympathetic note. He is pertinent in as much as the traditions currently joined in the CSI have never been separated by unbridgeable gulfs but have common roots in many respects. But does Ward do justice to the pathos of those who risked the "adventure of unity" in order to rid themselves at last of their old loyalties? And will an extended "comprehensiveness" still prove itself if ever the CSI should encounter a tradition which is truly different down to the very roots? Will the formula which sees the CSI as travelling a middle road between absorption and federalism (p. 193) still suffice then?

Perhaps such queries do injustice to Ward's book, in as much as he does not consciously raise them. One should, in any case, be grateful for the fact that, and the way in which, Ward himself emphasizes other unsolved problems of his church without in any way hiding their seriousness. As an example there is the chapter on Indian participation in church leadership. The question received renewed urgency through the recent election of a German missionary of the Basle mission by which the number of European bishops was maintained. Ward frankly admits that much is yet to be accomplished in

this area, indeed, that the Europeans theoretically approve and pray for something which they do not dare put into practice (p. 162). He openly discusses the occasional tendencies within the CSI to continue old divisions and partisanship within the union. Ward, however, points out that the union herself did nowhere create new rivalries of this kind (p. 187).

The shift of emphasis from the village into the city, noticeable since the merger, is another serious problem. What Ward has to say about this preponderance of "town mentality" (p. 189), applies equally to many other Indian churches. So do the allusions, admittedly sparse, to the most difficult question of all, that of the church's financial dependence upon the West. All the same, on the whole Ward can confidently conclude: "However much we stress the dark side, there is always much more to say on the other" (p. 189).

Perhaps it is time that non-Indian Lutheranism, too, should listen to the questions which have been unavoidably raised by the realization of the CSI, regardless of whether you can wholly agree with accounts such as Ward's, or not. Reality, here too, is stronger than all interpretations. Among the 230 titles in Sundkler's bibliography there are, if we have seen correctly, but five in German and only two which contain a Lutheran critique. If this may be taken as the measure of Lutheran interest, the situation is not encouraging. Thanks to the Lutheran Sundkler, as well as to Ward, all possible material on the growth and nature of the CSI has now been made available to all. For the Lutheran Churches it should be an imperative of ecumenical responsibility, not to pass this material by.

# FROM THE WORK OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

## *World Missions*

### Burning Problems Among the Churches of the Far East

Problems at the office desk are more or less unreal or academic; it is only when you come out to the field that they become real and are seen in their right setting.

There is too much talk of a new day, a new approach, a new situation; whereas in reality situations *always* develop out of yesterday's work and events. There is a continuity about the life of the younger churches that makes it dangerous to say that we have gone beyond the beginning and are now in one of the final chapters. The amazing thing today is that we have mission work in its early stages as well as situations where churches are taking over from the mission; and we also have advanced autonomous churches that still need outside assistance and, therefore, are not yet completely autonomous. After all, it is dangerous to speak of a local or national church as being autonomous — at least theologically. It might divert attention from the fact that every church belongs to the Church Universal.

All these varying degrees of development are present in the Lutheran Churches of the Far East, just as in Africa, and they are found in fascinating variety. What differences you find in going from the 600,000-strong Batak Church in Sumatra to the feeble beginnings in Singapore and Malaya; then crossing over to Hongkong with its strange mixture of old and new in a colonial setting, and on to Taiwan with its unquestionably patriotic population of free nationalist Chinese building, as it were, with a sword in one hand, wanting to progress as rapidly as possible with a Christian church. And then to end up in Japan — in a sur-

prisingly Western setting where a comparatively old-established Lutheran Church has now a number of young Lutheran missions settled down, spread over almost all the country.

Approaching these countries, it would be rash to ignore that, in all of them, we are dealing partly with very young mission work. Nor should one generalize, or forget that even two countries inhabited by the same people can be completely different; one country can learn from the history of another. It may be possible to communicate valuable experience from one part of the world to another. But in doing so we should always keep in mind that our country, our mission field, our young church, must be treated as something unique, its most essential characteristic being something that it does not have in common with other churches. This, of course, does not include the Gospel.

As for the comparatively new fields, it is wise to strike a note of caution. Even today, we cannot expect practically new work among, for instance, the Chinese, to advance much more quickly than it would have done in the last century, and although Japan, for example, has been a mission field for many years, it is a fact that what the many Lutheran churches started there after the last world war is a regular slow-process beginning. They have only just succeeded in settling down and are at the initial stage of operations.

It should be clear to all that in no country of the Far East is there any hope of a mass movement towards Christianity. On the contrary, the whole political outlook points to a consolidation of Christian missionary work in these areas; this is not just a matter of turning over money to the nationals in the different lands and saying "Go on, finish the job". If it

were only as easy as that! But for one thing, these countries do not yet possess the men and material needed. Some of them may not know clearly what Christianity really implies.

In one sense, missionary work today is not just a matter of sending out as many missionaries as possible. On the other hand, there is still a great need for missionaries — provided they are the right kind. While in some countries it is now almost impossible to use a missionary as a pioneer, starting new congregations, there are still areas where missionaries can do exactly this — at least to a certain extent. This seems to be the case, for instance, in Japan. Yet the healthiest start for mission work is when people move away from their own church and friends and emigrate with their families, taking their church with them. This was the way in which Christianity spread through the Mediterranean area in the first centuries. This is the way in which it was brought to so many other countries, for instance, in Africa; and this is the way in which Lutherans have started work in *Singapore*.

About 100 people from the Bataks and a similar number from India took their church with them. Today they own land on which to build a church and school. They have received gifts from America, as well as from the Lutheran World Federation, with the provision that they themselves must do their part in raising the remainder.

It is really inspiring to meet these people in *Singapore* and to experience how firmly they adhere to their faith and how eager they are to do something for it. There are already other Indian Lutheran congregations in *Malaya*. Soon, a few Chinese congregations will be added, and when the Lutheran Church of *Malaya* is founded it will certainly be a multi-racial church. They have already proved their missionary strength by keeping together as a diaspora group, and it will be interesting to follow developments there, even though it is a comparatively small undertaking.

One needs to be reminded that the two Chinese countries, *Taiwan* (For-

mosa) and the Crown Colony of *Hong-kong* should not be too closely identified. Both are, however, well governed today. It is a pleasure to spend a few days in exciting *Hong-kong* or on the wonderful island of *Taiwan*. From our Lutheran point of view they do have much in common. In both places, Lutheran work is only a few years old but, in both, experienced Chinese Christians from the mainland form the backbone of the work. In each area two constitutions have been drafted: one for the mission and one for the church. Ideally, however, there should be only one constitution, with provision made for the mission to fade out gradually and for the church to grow organically out of the mission. In *Hong-kong*, mission organization is not considered satisfactory, and an attempt is being made to concentrate all Lutheran forces in the colony. In *Taiwan*, however, work was set up on a united basis from the beginning, with only one missionary body established by the different countries and churches, and only one missionary conference. This start was excellent and the experiences have proved fruitful. It is now hoped to build up something similar in *Hong-kong* where the missions came in one by one. In forming a church constitution some time ago, *Hong-kong* elected the experienced Chinese Dr. Peng Fu as president. *Taiwan* followed this example towards the end of 1954 by electing a Chinese pastor as their first church president.

*Japan*, again, represents a very interesting stage of development. Sentimental impressions cause you to look with more favor on *Japan* when you arrive there in spring-time when all the fruit-trees are blossoming. But I think it is sobering to visit in cold and grey December, so as to be reminded of the country's real situation. If there were signs of a great mass movement towards Christianity immediately after World War II, this is certainly no longer true. On the contrary, the old religions are coming back in great strength. Temples are being restored, and we should not be surprised if even emperor-worship were to be re-estab-

lished. The spiritual unrest of a great part of the population is evident in the many peculiar sects, of both Christian and heathen origin, and it is perhaps significant for the situation that the "no-church group" today is stronger than ever before.

The sensation of the Lutheran missions is the reception of the "Lutheran Hour", heard by thousands of Japanese all over the country. A promising venture for the new congregations is the attempt to follow up the "Lutheran Hour" work by hunting for those individuals who have handed in their names and addresses to its office. This radio mission, sponsored by the Missouri Synod, is supported by almost all the other Lutheran missions, who provide funds for broadcasting it over the most important stations.

The peculiar Japanese situation which calls for a solid bridge between the new Lutheran mission work and the old-established Lutheran Church has happily passed through the initial stages. Preparatory committees on which every mission was represented took a stand on two documents: 1. a new church constitution, providing for considerable autonomy for the districts; and 2. a "Doctrinal Witness" intended mainly for "internal" use. These two documents must still be discussed by all the missionary conferences, as well as by the Synod of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, before they are submitted to the Home Boards in Europe and America. It should be borne in mind that all these different Lutheran missions represent different missionary principles. Some start by building up churches and schools and then invite the Japanese to enter. Others limit themselves to buying the necessary ground and then encourage the newly-born congregations to start fund-raising for buildings. Others, again, think it wise to open up work only in private homes or neutral meeting places on a very modest scale, letting the Japanese Christians take the lead from the beginning and decide the pace of development. Still others say that congregations should not be subsidized at all: they should begin by

tithing. All these different principles are yet too new to be compared for results, but they should be followed closely to see whether some lessons can be drawn from the different policies laid down in different Lutheran mission fields.

Beside all these new experiments, there stands the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church — mainly the result of the gallant work of the ULC of America — with its 7,000 members and 50—60 Japanese pastors. It has had to fight against heavy odds, mostly against the old Japanese culture which does not want to give way to Christianity. The Japanese educational system does not in any way favor acceptance of Christianity. And several thousand Christians spread over the whole country cannot possibly form a solid church economy. What is actually taking place in Lutheran Japan today is a consolidation of confessional stand-points, church order, and economic principles. Strangely enough, missionaries can be used in forming new congregations in westernized Japan—but only to a certain extent. They will, of course, all agree to seek the autonomy of the church; at the same time they have their Western outlook and mind. The situation calls for great discretion and understanding on both sides. There is every reason to follow the developments in this nation with interest and much prayer. They have revealed great dynamic energy in the political sphere of life. When the time comes that God claims them for His own purposes, a new day will dawn for the Far East.

*The Batak Church* represents a different stage in the development of an autonomous church. Independent missionary work has ceased here; the autonomous church has come to stay as the actual instrument of congregational life and missionary activity. In many ways it is a church bustling with life. Grown-ups fill the church buildings to capacity; 150,000 children fill the schools. There is much activity in this church which is administered by outstanding leaders. Owing to the great changes caused by wars and

revolutions and the creation of a new state, so many Batak leaders have been absorbed by the government that the Batak Church herself now lacks not only pastors but also lay leadership. The head of the church is titled "Ephorus", and at his side is the General Secretary; each district has its president. All of these are, of course, Batak people. On the advice of non-Lutherans they turned to the LWF in their dire need. A five-year plan was set up by which LWF is trying to help where aid is most needed.

Reconstruction work alone would have been a heavy burden for many years. Yet these very energetic people also developed the plan of building a university! This bold decision was taken at the General Synod of the Church in 1953 and, in explanation, the Ephorus said: the idea came from the people and was so insistent that we as leaders could only give way before it. They themselves decided on the appropriate name of "Nommensen University", in honor of the German pioneer missionary from Schleswig. At first there were elaborate schemes for a big university but, as time went on, the economic situation both outside and within the country and church forced them to work out more sober plans. They are now trying to build up two faculties, besides the theological training institution already much strengthened by LWF.

Thus this University is the result of strong will on the part of people and church. The decision was taken exclusively by the Bataks themselves. Now they plead for help so as to be able to carry it through, together with all their other duties of church, school, and social work. Hemmed in by a great Mohammedan majority, the whole Batak people seems to have accepted Christianity as a religious foundation. They are a "Luther's-Small-Catechism-Church". The Rhenish Mission Society once sent out men such as Nommensen and Warneck, among many others. Their period represents one of the most remarkable chapters in Protestant Missions — and it is good to know that the present leaders of the church are

carrying on the tradition. Here again, we have an independent church which nevertheless requests help from foreign personnel: teachers, preachers, and doctors. In an autonomous church within a state which has recently gone through the metamorphosis from colonial dependence to independent statehood, there are many unexpected difficulties and here, too, relations between foreign helpers and the national church call for great tact and Christian charity on both sides.

These glimpses of the Far East show us, in a nutshell, how complicated — but also how fascinating — the whole missionary situation and spiritual outlook is today. Developments in this part of the world deserve attention from all members of the Lutheran world family, wherever they may be.

F. Birkeli

## *Theology*

### PRIZE ESSAY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Lutheran World Federation, through its Commission on Theology, hereby announces two prizes, to be awarded for the best manuscripts submitted on either of these two themes:

Prize I — \$ 250

The Concept of Apostolicity in the early Church up to the formation of the Canon.

Prize II — \$ 125

The Continuity of the Church in the teaching of Luther.

#### *Stipulations*

1. The manuscripts may be submitted in English, German, or a Scandinavian language—Scandinavian mss. shall be accompanied by a digest in German or English.

2. Four typewritten copies of each ms. shall be in the office of the Lutheran World Federation, Department of Theology, by December 31, 1956. The name of the author shall not appear on the ms. but be enclosed in a sealed envelope accompanying the ms.

3. Judges will be selected by the Theological Commission of the Lutheran World Federation, which retains the right to

- a) give an award to more than one author if several valuable essays are submitted,
- b) divide the award if the essays submitted are not of the required quality but are worthy of recognition,

- c) withhold the award if none of the essays meets desired standards,
- d) publish the prize essays in part or in whole; and to consider these the property of the Lutheran World Federation, unless other arrangements are made with the author.

Further information may be secured from the Department of Theology, Lutheran World Federation, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland.

# THE ECUMENICAL WORLD

## Ecumenicity in Eastern Europe

When Lutheran Bishop Ordass intended to go to Amsterdam in 1948 to attend the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches as a delegate of his church, he was refused an exit permit by the authorities of the Hungarian state. These same authorities recently allowed five Hungarian Protestants to travel to Evanston as delegates to the second Assembly of the Council.

These Hungarian delegates had previously participated in international church conferences—Hannover, Lund, and Woudschoten. In reverse, two representatives of the World Council of Churches, Dr. George Bell, Bishop of Chichester and general secretary Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, had paid a visit to Hungary's Protestant churches in February 1954.

More important than these visits and the personal contact they provide is the fact that we now have available voluminous printed material which provides some insight into the ecumenical thought of the current Hungarian church leadership. During the first years of its existence, this leadership, newly formed in 1948, hardly seemed to know what its position relative to the World Council of Churches ought to be. But in the course of the past two years it seems to have attained some understanding of its relation to the ecumenical movement; at any rate its representatives performed thorough preparatory work for the Evanston conference. Moreover, the latest reports that have reached us from Hungary indicate that a follow-up of the subjects discussed at Evanston has already begun in Budapest.

The most detailed document available is the report which was prepared by the Hungarian ecumenical study commission in 1953 in response to the "Second Report" formulated by the

Advisory Commission at its Bossey session (September 1—9, 1952).<sup>1</sup> The present paper is based primarily on this Hungarian report and also uses other material published both before and after Evanston. Some sections of the Hungarian study commission's report have been reprinted in English translation in the January 1954 issue of *The Ecumenical Review* (= ER). It was carried in full by the Hungarian Lutheran journal *Lelkipasztor* (= LP), while various comments on it appeared in Hungary's Lutheran church paper *Evangelikus Elet* (= EE).<sup>2</sup>

The Hungarian study commission was made up of 45 Reformed and 15 Lutheran members. Since these delegates were appointed by their churches, that is, by their highest leadership, the report gives us an interesting insight into the characteristic type of ecumenical thought which dominates the representatives of Hungary's Protestant churches currently in authority.

## The World Council of Churches: a Political Forum

The Report indicates, first of all, in what light the World Council of Churches is seen by the leading representatives of the Hungarian Church. It appears that neither its right of existence nor the basis of its work is now questioned from a theological point of view, or even regarded as problematical. The World Council of Churches is accepted in the form in which it currently exists; indeed there seems to be the idea that the Council has very recently undergone a positive development.

<sup>2</sup> LP (*The Pastor*) is the only journal of Hungarian Lutheranism; issued monthly, it directs itself primarily to pastors and is edited by Bishop Vető. EE (*Evangelical Life*) is the Lutherans' only church weekly. It is published by Bishop Dezserly.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in full in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. V., pp. 73 ff.

If you inquire just what constitutes this positive development, the above-named report declares that the word of Holy Scripture has been placed in a more central position during the preparations for Evanston than was the case previous to the Amsterdam conference (LP p. 303; not in ER). But this favorable development is mentioned also in a different connection. The report, without any further explanation, speaks particularly of "the results of Lucknow" and of "the promising consequences of the Lucknow conference".

Apparently this refers to the letters which the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches wrote to the member churches and to the United Nations following the Lucknow conference in India (Dec. 1952—Jan. 1953). The note to the United Nations (ER Vol. V, pp. 285 ff.) had expressed the request that every effort that might lead to an early peace treaty in Korea be exerted, while the letter to member churches (*op. cit.*, pp. 283 ff.) was concerned with the problems of the peoples of Asia. In themselves, these letters contain nothing that might cause any special stir. Doubtless, at the time a large number of member churches were grateful for this Central Committee action. What lent special significance to the affair in the eyes of Hungarian representatives was the possibility of relating it to the peace propaganda in which the East-European states have been engaged in recent years and in which the church press of Hungarian Lutherans and Reformed had participated.

The so-called peace congresses take foremost position in this. The same bishops — Vetö and Dezsery of the Lutheran Church, Bereczky and Peter of the Reformed Church — who, on occasion, participate in international church gatherings, have for several years been regular representatives of the Hungarian "Peace Council" at the so-called "peace meetings" and "peace congresses". Since the outbreak of the Korean war, the speeches at these peace congresses have almost un-failingly been combined with a demonstration supporting the Korean dele-

gates, who were cheered and called upon to fight on for final victory. Thus, when the report of the Hungarian study commission points to the "promising consequences of the Lucknow conference", it means to imply that the Central Committee "has undertaken a significant step towards the conclusion of the Korean war" (Bishop Vetö, according to LP, Feb. 1953, p. 60).

Yet despite this "favorable development" the Hungarians retain a certain suspicion of the WCC. The Council's vacillation between Scylla and Charybdis, between the political centers of Rome and Washington, represents a warning example, according to Bishop Dezsery (LP 1953, p. 452).

Concerning the churches' work for peace, the Bishop of Chichester had stressed in his review of the Lucknow meeting (ER Vol. V, p. 231) that already the Amsterdam conference had clearly stated that war could be avoided if men would return to God. A statement of the Oxford conference from the year 1937 which was taken up and stressed at Amsterdam (ER Vol. IV, p. 443) declares unequivocally: War is contrary to the will of God.

But these proofs of the churches' desire for peace seem to be insufficient to some East-European representatives. Hitherto, the World Council has failed to join the communist peace movement and thus rouses the suspicion that it is serving the political interests of the West. As recently as February 1954, the well-known Czech Professor Hromádka took an ecumenical conference in Hungary as the occasion to cite as an acute danger the fact that there were groups within the World Council of Churches that wanted to turn the Council into a bastion of political power against communism (*Hungarian Church Press* Vol. VI, No. 4, Feb. 15, 1954, p. 11).

Accordingly, the Hungarians consider it one of their most important ecumenical tasks "to disturb the conscience of the churches of the world, indeed, to be their sign-post" (Bishop Dezsery, according to LP 1953, p. 446), that is, to give direction to the churches' attitude towards problems of international politics. When you speak

of any international church conference, you must always evaluate the conference's attitude towards the international political situation. From this point of view, the WCC Central Committee meeting at Toronto, 1950, is pointed out as the "lowest point in the history of the ecumenical movement" (LP 1953, p. 445). The essential result of Visser 't Hooft's visit is recorded as: "We should do everything in our power to lessen international tensions" (EE, Feb. 28, 1954). And the primary question raised in connection with the Evanston conference is whether it will be able to "manifest the Christian hope" by contributing to "the solution of the great problems of mankind" (ER Vol. VI, p. 183).

Such thoughts reveal clearly that Hungarian representatives regard the World Council of Churches chiefly as a forum for the discussion of international affairs by the churches, a forum which permits them to air their political views. This attitude runs like a red thread through the whole report, and is most evident where it deals with the theme of the Evanston conference—Christ the Hope of the World. "The Church has the task... of assuming and carrying the burdens of the *oikumene*, the inhabited world, in hope" (ER, *op. cit.*, p. 181). "People hope well when... they seek to overcome the real and artificial conflicts in the present world situation" (*op. cit.*, p. 182). "Our Churches and the World Council of Churches have a great opportunity today, in the theme of the Second Assembly... to recognize the right and obedient attitude for the Church and the service it should render for the benefit of mankind and for peace" (*op. cit.* p. 184).

The talks given by the Hungarian delegates since the Evanston conference also prove how one-sidedly they understood the significance and the tasks of the Assembly. Bishop Bereczky stressed especially two matters in his report to the Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church: First, the motion for the Assembly to adopt a protest against atomic weapons; second, his belief that there are now a

large number of delegates who are spiritually "members of the peace-movement (in the East-European meaning of that word) even though they themselves may not yet have become conscious of it" (EE Sept. 21, 1954). The lectures and written reports of the Hungarian delegates returned from Evanston are full of such phrases, while they hardly talk about the actual theological and spiritual work of the Assembly.

### Ecumenism and International Understanding

The report of the Hungarian study commission, however, does not just indicate its attitude to the organization of the World Council of Churches, but shows a very specific conception of ecumenism in general.

Faith and Order, the first sub-section at Evanston, had the theme: Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity as Churches. In the course of the discussion on this theme, the Hungarian delegation reported its ecumenical experiences. It was stressed that among Hungary's churches "unity and solidarity with Christians of all the world had been strengthened" (LP July 1953, p. 310; not in ER). This, however, did not refer to participation in the work of the World Council but to unity and solidarity with world Christianity in general. The report stresses the firmer ties between Hungary's Lutheran groups and the much closer relations between the churches of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

To be sure, the report apparently refers here primarily to the meeting of Hungary's Protestant bishops with other leading clergymen at the peace congresses. One of the standing representatives of the peace congresses, Metropolitan Nikolaj, deputy of the Patriarch of Moscow, was granted an honorary doctor's degree in January 1954 by the Reformed Theological Seminary at Debrecen. The Lutheran Church was represented at the solemn investiture which EE described as a "mighty sign of God" (Feb. 7, 1954).

The new and close association of Protestant groups in Hungary was shown when, in January of last year, Baptists, Methodists, Reformed and Lutherans in the town of Nyiregyhaza jointly observed the worldwide Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. On this occasion as the *Hungarian Church Press* reports (Jan. 15, 1954, p. 6), this "ecumenical assembly" sent messages to the various Hungarian church leaders expressing hope for the success of the forthcoming communist peace congress.

Along these lines, the Budapest performance of the film of the Moscow peace congress in which leaders of various religious communities in the USSR—Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, etc.—had participated, was a special high-point. "All who believe in God also work for peace" was EE's front-page headline above its review of the film's première (Dec. 14, 1952). The article goes into raptures over the large number of clergymen who had participated in the conference and points out with particular pleasure that the Lutheran archbishop of the Latvian Soviet Republic could be spotted among the participants. The theological journal LP characterizes this Moscow congress as "one of the world's greatest ecumenical events" (LP 1953, p. 12).

### The Reformed Church and Barthian Theology

What, then, is the theologic background of this concept of "ecumenism"? In answering this question you must remember that ecumenical work in Hungary is strongly under the influence of the Reformed Church. As far as membership goes, the Reformed Church is four times as powerful as the Lutheran Church, and it is she who furnished the renowned representatives among the *new* church leadership.

a) The Reformed influence appears, above all, in an "Old Testament" view of history. Not infrequently, parallels are drawn between the Old Testament prophets and contemporary church leadership. Like the prophets of old,

the church leaders now must point the people's way. It is true that in Hungary Protestantism has frequently been the bearer of historic development. We need only recall the national struggles which were fought under the direction of Protestant statesmen. The same Bocskay who occupies such a prominent spot in the Reformation Monument at Geneva was also a national hero in the eyes of Hungarians. The national uprisings against the Hapsburgs were, at the same time, Protestant wars of liberation. The Protestant heroes of liberty of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries embodied, each in his time, the will of the Hungarian nation under the given historical circumstances. It is the belief of Hungary's present church leaders that they, too, find themselves in such a "moment of history" which demands of them the fulfilment of a prophetic mission.

What is tragic in this view of history is that it combines the consciousness of a prophetic mission with historical determinism. These men stress "the inevitable development of history"; but far from being satisfied with proclaiming "the rod of divine wrath", they feel called upon to set forth their noisy approval of this judgment of God.

b) The influence of Reformed theology becomes perceptible also in another important point. One expression which constantly recurs in the above-mentioned report is the notion of "obedience". "Our Churches... have a great opportunity... to recognize the right and obedient attitude for the Church" (ER, Vol. VI, p. 184). "In part we already have unity, in part it is the task for our obedience" (LP, p. 312). "The quest for unity is a fruit of our obedience" (*ibid.*). "This is the road to unity, that each church follow the Head and become obedient to Him" (*op. cit.*, p. 313), etc., etc. Already this expression and the frequency of its use give away the fact that this Hungarian "ecumenism" stands in direct dependence upon Karl Barth, the father of dialectic theology. In the years 1948/49 Karl Barth exercised decisive influence upon church life in Hungary (cf. Henrik Hauge, "Karl Barth som kirke-

politiker", *Kirke og Kultur*, LIV, pp. 321—337). The leading representatives of Hungary's Reformed Church, and some influential men of the Lutheran Church as well, are his pupils. Among the theological slogans ever in their mouths are the expressions "theology of the Word" and "the path of obedience". By this they mean to assert that the Church must at all times and in all concrete situations comply with the directions of the Word.

We do not here intend to oppose a Lutheran interpretation to this understanding of obedience of Barth's. The "theology of obedience" was fatal, above all, because it granted free play to the Hungarian church leaders' understanding of church, state, and society. Let us illustrate this by two instances.

There is, first, the view that it is the primary task of the Church "to be comforter, counselor, and guiding light to mankind" since "according to God's plan Christianity is to become a blessing for humanity" (EE, in its editorial of April 19, 1953). Thus the Gospel is clearly levelled to a directive for the benefit of society. Addresses and sermons are introduced by a Bible verse followed by this or that quotation from Luther together with the assertion that Luther had fought for a "Christianity related closely to life" — that is, for solidarity with one's people in all topical issues; then they turn to a glorification of the government's gigantic plans and the North Koreans' war for liberty; and the speeches end by hinting that it is the Christian duty of people to join the peace movement.

"For 2,000 years Christianity lacked the strength to fulfil the promise of peace, nor did it show any of that concern for fellowmen which was to grow out of love of neighbor and for whose realization socialism fights. The Lutheran Church of Hungary can help to make good the missed opportunity and in this she will continue Luther's mission transposed into our own time." These statements by an East-German politician were reprinted on the front page of a Hungarian church paper (EE,

Dec. 7, 1952), proof of the extent to which this new form of the "Social Gospel" is accepted.

This conviction is now combined with another — tacit — assumption, namely that the present Hungarian government is instituted by God and that—therefore—all its decrees are justified. This view is quite unmistakably avowed in the report of the Hungarian study commission: "We must give special thanks to God that *His universal grace* has been so powerfully active in the life of our people, when this country is rising out of the sins, misery and failures of the social system..." (ER, Vol. VI, p. 183).

In the course of the past years these two instances have turned into axioms entirely beyond debate. As such they determine the actions of Hungarian church leaders in the highest degree, even in the area of ecumenical work—and this quite apart from any kind of "theology of the Word" or "theology of obedience".

c) The ecumenical approach of Hungarian church leaders is irresistibly determined by the influence of a "non-theological factor"—to use a phrase of the 1952 Lund Conference: by their political obligation. Of course the love of Christ should allow us to overcome again and again the barriers of different political opinion; but it is difficult to achieve a conversation when your partner regards these opinions as the true core of all ecumenical problems. The paper *Evangelikus Elet* has quite openly admitted this. In an article of July 13, 1952 it says that non-theological (i. e., political, economic, etc.) factors are probably "*the most important theological issues*" for us.

Such a view must hold sad consequences for ecumenical conversation. Beyond that, it also reveals an apparent theological weakness. For when political questions are turned into the main theological issues, Law and Gospel have been confused. But a clear distinction between them is one of the most essential conditions for a clear theology and therefore also for true participation in the solution of ecumenical issues. Laszlo G. Terray

# FROM LANDS AND CHURCHES

## *Japan*

### Lutheranism in Japan Today

#### Post-War Conditions in Japan

It was the universal opinion of Western Churchmen who visited Japan in the early post-world-war II years, concurred in by most Japanese leaders themselves, that a spiritual vacuum had been created in that country by the complete defeat of the Japanese nation at the hands of the Allied Powers, capped by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Therefore, it was asserted that there had scarcely ever existed an opportunity for Christian mission work at any time or place in the world such as that presented by the Japanese nation in defeat. Repeated calls were issued from all concerned — from MacArthur as Supreme Commander to native Christian leaders (echoed by the various missionary-sending agencies abroad)—for the advent of missionaries to improve this situation.

Available statistics evidence the heartening response with which this call was met; yet the same statistical tables may prove somewhat disappointing to many in regard to the numerical growth of the Christian forces within Japan. It might not be amiss here to state that the latest annual figures reveal a total (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) membership of approximately 5% of the population, as against the pre-war figure of approximately 3%. The casual observer may question the disparity between missionary increase and membership growth in the Japanese church. In fairness to the missionaries themselves it should be noted that, due to the difficulty of the Japanese language, several years must elapse before a missionary is equipped for much actual evangelistic work; and it must be remembered that

the great majority of these missionaries have been "new" — going to Japan for the first time, and hence without a working knowledge of Japanese (either language or psychology). Thus I would have you infer that greater growth may be expected in the next few years than was recorded in the years since the war.

Further, it must be remembered that Christianity has not been the only force at work to capture the mind and devotion of the Japanese. Communism and Socialism have made strong bids for the allegiance of the Japanese public and have joined forces on frequent occasions in order to make a more evident impact. Other "isms" of the West have found less following and yet have contributed to the creation of an atmosphere uncongenial to effective Christian work. While Buddhism and Shinto were never as dead or deserted as some would have had us believe, it is only within the last year or two that they have shown definite signs of any revival, and today the latter seems to be making a definite bid to re-establish its immediate pre-war and wartime hold on the Japanese mind.

Another force, yet too little known or appreciated, is the large group of "new" religions which have grown up in Japan during these recent years. It has been estimated that there are some 200 such sects, some of which show definite influences of Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity, or other established faiths, and some of which seem quite outside all of these spheres. A few of them existed in pre-war days, but more have been initiated in the unsettled post-war period to appeal to some of the social, psychological, or religious problems of the people. A dozen or more of them are really significant for the future and deserve study to determine their most salient features.

The religious vacuum of which we heard so frequently in earlier years can scarcely be said to exist now; at

the same time the eagerness with which the Japanese turned to all things coming from America (including Christianity) is a thing of the past. However, we believe that the present time is much more opportune for a fruitful growth of the Christian forces than that five years ago. Statistics are deceptive here, because it is much easier to record baptisms than to admit defections. Those of us who have been at work in Japan (and I include our Japanese co-workers) are painfully aware of the many who have been baptised only to fall away within a short time. We are gratified that there is less and less of this and feel that now a great majority of those who join the Christian cause will remain members.

### Lutheran Work in Japan

As is generally known, the Lutheran Church was represented in Japan until post-war days through the mission work of three bodies. This was first undertaken by the United Synod in the South in 1892, beginning in the island of Kyushu (southernmost of the four main islands), in which work she was later joined by the Danish Lutheran Church in America (UELC). The third Lutheran group to undertake work in Japan was the Lutheran Church of Finland. The work of the United Synod in the South became that of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) after its formation in 1918, and the UELC continued co-operating in this work, so that the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) is the result of ULCA-UELC mission work. The number of missionaries of the Finnish Lutheran Mission has varied greatly from time to time but has never been very large, and this society has worked in Honshu (the main island) and Hokkaido (the northern island), establishing congregations at both places. Due to the probability of the outbreak of war, this smaller group joined the JELC in October of 1940 in order to present a consolidated Lutheran front.

During the war years the Lutheran Church found its place in the government-inspired *Kyodan* ("United Church of Christ"), first as a "block" and later simply as a part of the whole. However, the Lutheran Church never lost its identity (true also of the other denominations), and pastoral changes effected during this period resulted in pastors of "former Lutheran adherence" being assigned to churches of "former Lutheran denomination". These Lutherans never felt quite at home in the non-denominational, non-doctrinal *Kyodan* and, because of their numerical minority, were never able to bear too great an influence on the character of the whole. Therefore, in the early post-war years, they determined to withdraw from the *Kyodan* in order to re-establish themselves as a positive Lutheran Church. The Finnish Mission re-established itself as a separate body but finally re-entered the JELC in 1953. Thus, there exists in Japan today one Lutheran Church representing the mission work of the three societies which worked in Japan before the war (as well as the Augustana Synod, as will be noted later).

However, with the excellent opportunity for evangelism which existed in Japan, many other Lutheran groups began to look there for a field to replace the fast-disappearing one which they had occupied in China, in many cases transferring their missionaries to Japan as they were forced out of China. In this instance, China's loss was certainly Japan's gain. To list the new-comers to Japan (not in chronological order) is but to show the prospects for the future. From Norway have come three groups—the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (sometimes called the "Layman's Mission Society"), the Norwegian Mission Society (representing the "State Church"), and the Free Lutheran Mission of Norway (Lutheran Free Church of Norway). From America have come the Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (the American branch of the Lutheran Free Church co-operating in this mission), the Augustana Lutheran Church, the Suomi Synod, the Lutheran

Brethren, and the Wisconsin Synod. Thus there are representatives of thirteen Lutheran groups from three overseas countries at work in Japan today.

### The All Lutheran Free Conference

The JELC has welcomed the coming of all of these groups, officially and actually, and in many cases has rendered invaluable help to these new missions trying to get started. However, there is no point in denying that the existence of so many Lutheran groups in Japan does present a problem in the thought of the Japanese. As a sincere effort to try and solve this problem, the JELC initiated efforts which lead to the formation of the All Lutheran Free Conference some four years ago. To this conference each group (including the JELC) elects two official representatives, but all are welcome to attend the conference meetings held spring and fall. These meetings have attracted increasing interest, especially during the past year — ever since the serious discussion of the problem and possibilities of *Lutheran Unity* in Japan has been undertaken. Although I was chairman of the Conference at the time this study was initiated, the following observations are my own personal reactions rather than the official conclusions reached in Conference.

Naturally, in the earlier discussions, considerable time was spent in clearing the air; and with Lutherans of so many backgrounds and traditions involved, it was not unnatural that much time was spent in ascertaining where the others stood, and in assuring oneself that the others, too, were Lutherans of acceptable doctrinal position. The spirit of all was most congenial, and the willingness to co-operate most heartening. The official position of some parent organizations makes actual *union* by all impossible for the time being, but all heartily endorsed the more general idea of *unity* and co-operation.

The first practical steps in this direction were taken several years ago in the creation of the Lutheran Literature Society under the auspices of the All Lutheran Free Conference. A number of sorely needed publications have come from this Society; its first undertaking was a new translation of Luther's Small Catechism. A monthly evangelistic newspaper, thus jointly published, has been eminently successful and is widely used by all groups. A number of tracts have been prepared and are serving their purpose throughout Japan. The importance of printed matter need not be emphasized when it is remembered that the Japanese people are almost all literate, and all of them avid readers. Proposals for the publication of a Service Book, a Hymnal, and Sunday School literature have been received and are now being considered. (At the moment the JELC Service Book is used by several of the other groups also, and the common Protestant Hymnal, though not too acceptable in some ways, is used by all the groups. The JELC has issued Sunday School guides, and the Missouri Synod has published the Concordia series of lesson pamphlets, both of which have been used by other groups.) Thus we might say that from the standpoint of literary effort the co-operation of all groups has been very good and shows promise of significant accomplishment in the future.

Another field in which the All Lutheran Free Conference has contributed to successful unity has been that of over-all strategy. As the other groups began sending missionaries into Japan, it was recognized that some plan would have to be followed to avoid overlapping and duplication of effort, as well as to achieve the widest possible spread of the Lutheran Church in Japan. In the days before the Conference was initiated, the new groups consulted with the existing JELC regarding the location of their missionaries and proposed fields of work. Since its establishment, the Conference has undertaken studies to determine where and by whom existing fields should be

expanded, and who should enter new areas. Although the Conference does not have power to take binding action, its conclusions have been respected, and the several groups have willingly co-operated, so that now most of the major areas of Japan have been roughly designated as fields for work by one group or another.

Here the work of the Augustana Synod should be mentioned. This group sent its secretaries to make investigation prior to the sending of the first missionaries, and agreement was reached by the JELC and the Augustana Synod Foreign Mission Board so that missionaries of the latter could work within the JELC on the same basis as ULCA missionaries. Augustana is therefore the only group which joined the JELC when starting work in Japan, and its work has been supported by the JELC from the beginning. It is to be hoped that the mutual co-operation and support of Augustana-JELC will serve as a pattern for the other groups. The JELC furnished pastors and evangelists to work with the missionaries in the establishment and supervision of congregations, and these congregations were member-churches in the JELC from their inception. On the other hand, the Augustana Mission has contributed to the financial support of the JELC and its Theological Seminary and co-operates in the various boards and agencies of the church as an integral part of the church, not as an outside group.

### The Road Ahead

The goal of the All Lutheran Free Conference, and the eager hope of the JELC, is the complete integration of all Lutherans at work in Japan into one Lutheran Church. Yet it is clearly evident that for the present this final goal is impossible of achievement. Therefore the JELC has stated its willingness to enter into further discussion and study with any group or groups in order to bring about greater

unity and union. Such specific study and discussion has been under way with the ELC for some time, and we hope that the day is not too distant when this group will also be a real part of the JELC. In fairness to the mission groups, it must be admitted that a union between "missions" and "national church" is a very awkward thing, and progress will undoubtedly be more rapid as organized congregations increase and as indigenous leadership develops in these "mission churches" of the several groups.

The Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary is the school of the JELC and as such is supported from abroad by the ULCA, the Finnish Mission Society, and the Augustana Synod. However, since this is the only Lutheran seminary in Japan, other groups will probably have to look to it for the training of their native leaders. The Missouri Synod has established a small theological faculty in Tokyo, also, and is training her leaders there for the present. The ELC has made contributions to the Seminary, has designated one its missionaries as full time lecturer (in full agreement with the board of the Seminary), and sends its young men there for training. Undoubtedly, the Seminary will be one of the focal points in any union; and when the time comes when all the groups can join in a union, the Seminary will become even stronger (with augmented faculty) and more important, as the one institution for training Japanese leaders.

As yet, the Lutheran Church is numerically small in Japan. The JELC reports slightly more than 7000 baptized members at present—a significant gain since the end of the war, as only a few more than 2000 of the former membership (some 5000) could be found at that time. With some 60 Japanese pastors (including the as-yet-unordained new seminary graduates) and about 50 missionaries, prospects for the rapid growth of the 80 churches and preaching places are extremely good. However, this is far from the total impact of the Lutheran Church in Japan, for it does not take into account

the missionaries of the other groups, their preaching places (with only a few organized congregations so far), and their baptized membership. Suffice it to say that with a total Lutheran missionary body of 250, which is more than 20% of the total protestant missionary strength in Japan today, the Lutheran Church should rapidly assume its proper place amongst the churches in Japan. The majority of these missionaries have now completed their period of language study and have entered actual evangelistic work, and we expect to see congregations organized shortly in all parts of the land. Certainly the *Lutheran Hour* radio broadcasts of the Missouri Synod have even now made a strong impact in the far reaches of the nation, and its many contacts have provided opportunities to initiate new preaching places, Bible study classes, and Sunday Schools.

It should go without saying that no mission agency is eager to continue its existence as such but seeks to establish an indigenous church. Equally obvious is the fact that such a goal is entirely dependent on native leadership of ability. Therefore the crucial question is this: what sort of leadership does the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church have, and what can it produce in the near future? — First of all, it should be said that Japanese Lutherans are keenly aware of their Lutheran heritage. It was probably this fact more than any other one which led them to withdraw from the Kyodan at the close of the war.

Then be it said that we do have capable leaders in our church. Capable and effective pastors, widely known preachers, able theologians—all are to be found in the JELC today, and there is every reason to believe that among the younger men will be found others of equal caliber. Of the preachers of outstanding ability I mention Dr. H. Inadomi of Osaka simply because he is so well-known in America and Europe, but I hasten to add that in Japan others also are recognized by frequent requests to preach and speak to all manner of groups. When we

think of theologians, we are not restricted to the seminary faculty, though of course our Dr. C. Kishi, president of the Seminary, needs no introduction or praise to his many acquaintances in America. Here, too, should be mentioned Prof. Kitamori whose reputation as a theologian is sufficiently wide in Japan that a "school" or "system" of theological thought has been named for him. It is doubtful whether he has an equal in the field of doctrinal theology in Japan, and his praises are as highly sung by those of other denominations as by his fellow Lutherans. He presents a somewhat anomalous situation in that he decided to remain within the Kyodan when the Lutheran Church withdrew and reorganized. It was his conviction that Lutherans should bring their positive witness to bear in that group, and the fact that the Kyodan has finally come to the adoption of a doctrinal statement is evidence of his contribution. That he teaches in both the Kyodan seminary and our own shows how highly his ability is esteemed.

Another name well-known in Japan and abroad is that of Pastor K. Hirai, formerly president of the JELC and presently teaching at the seminary, while at the same time serving as vice-president of the National Christian Council, and representing both the Lutheran Church of Japan and the Japanese Christian Church on various committees, agencies, etc., at home and abroad. The current president of the JELC, Pastor Y. Makise, is not well-known abroad, but his excellent leadership ability is recognized in Japan. The lay leadership of the church does not fall behind that of the pastorate and numbers not a few capable and consecrated men and women, many of whom hold high positions in government, business, and community affairs.

In conclusion, then: with the excellent leadership of the national church, the willingness of the various groups to co-operate, the desire for unity, the large number of missionaries, and the ample opportunity for evan-

gelism which exist in Japan today, the prospect for steady growth of the Lutheran Church is very good. However, we must not be lulled into the temptation of thinking the way will be easy or the growth automatic because of these factors. It is as true in Japan today as it ever was at any time or place in history that the only way the Kingdom can be extended is on an individual basis—each human being must be won individually. Personal evangelism is still the key which unlocks the Kingdom of Heaven for all those whom He has redeemed.

B. Paul Huddle

## *Luxembourg*

### The Protestant Church of Luxembourg

Bounded by Germany on the east, Belgium on the north and west, and France on the south, lies the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The area of this country is 999 square miles and the inhabitants number 290,992.

The population is almost entirely Roman Catholic.

There is, however, a small Protestant Church in Luxembourg, numbering 4,583 baptized members. Thus, 1½% of the country's population is Protestant.

The Protestant Church in Luxembourg has not been indigenous since the days of the Reformation. In fact, the first Protestant group in Luxembourg was organized as a garrison congregation during the French occupation in 1813. This congregation's building was handed over to the small civilian Protestant group in 1819.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the Protestant group of Luxembourg was organized as a state church under the Napoleonic Law of 1802 which is still valid in Luxembourg. This was done through the influence of Grand-duke Adolf who also had the church's altar installed.

At this time the sacraments began to be administered according to Lutheran rite, and Luther's *Small Catechism* was introduced as the principal part of religious instruction.

The Constitution of the Protestant community was approved on April 10, 1894. On that day the Protestant Church of Luxembourg came formally into existence as a state church.

According to the Napoleonic Law, each doctrinal decision or change in discipline must have the approval of the State. The pastors must study in the theological schools of France or Switzerland. The church is subsidized by the state.

The Constitution of the Protestant Church emphasizes three things:

1. To the Protestant Church belong all Protestants of Reformed and Augsburg Confessions.
2. The administration is in the hands of a Church Council. This Church Council elects pastors whose election must be confirmed by the government. The Church Council takes care of church order and discipline and supervises finances.
3. There is only one congregation in the whole land. Groups in different localities outside Luxembourg are only "annexes". These groups are entitled to representation in the Council.

The Constitution is only a skeleton constitution. It does not enter into details of creed, confessions, detailed definition of membership, duties of pastor, discipline. The doctrinal basis is not elaborated at all.

For a while the Church was under the jurisdiction of the Church of Hessen-Nassau. Later, this relationship was dissolved, and the Protestant Church became autonomous.

In 1951, its chief pastor was ordained as bishop.

The Protestants of Luxembourg reside principally in the capital city and nearby towns.

The detailed statistics are as follows:

Luxembourg .....	2,000 baptized,	Bishop N. Housse, pastor
Esch .....	1,200	„ Mr. Bronbacher, pastor
Differdingen /	„	Mr. Bauman, theol. stud. in
Oberkorn .....	600	Montpellier
Rumelingen .....	200	„
Dudelingen .....	400	„
Wiltz .....	80	„
Diekirch .....	65	„
Wasserbillig .....	38	„
<hr/>		
4,583 baptized		

There are also 540 families who reside in Luxembourg in connection with the European Coal and Steel Community (Schumann Plan). Most of these are Protestant and occasionally attend services.

Luxembourg, Esch, and Differdingen-Oberkorn have church buildings and parsonages; Rumelingen and Dudelingen have chapels; the other congregations hold services in government or private buildings.

The whole Luxembourg Protestant Church is served by two ordained pastors and one theological student. Services are also conducted by laymen.

The membership of the Church consists almost 100 % of German speaking immigrants from all parts of Germany and Alsace-Lorraine in France.

The average attendance at Sunday Divine Services in Luxembourg City is 200.

The liturgy used is a special one prepared for Luxembourg by Pastor Housse (1950). Hymnal used is that of the Alsace-Lorraine Church.

The Senior Young People Society has 84 members; the Junior Group, 35. There are 124 children of school age.

Religious education is conducted in State schools on free days (both, elementary and secondary schools). Passing mark in religion is necessary for advancement from lower to higher classes. A school plan is worked out; Bible, Luther's Catechism, and doctrines comprising the principal parts of the curriculum.

The Protestant Church of Luxembourg publishes a monthly paper entitled "Evangelischer Glaubensbote".

The Church receives a regular annual subsidy both for congregational

expenses and pastors' salaries. No regular, systematic giving is developed in the congregations.

State support also provides rooms for Divine Services in the annex-congregations. Thus, some services are held in city halls, etc.

A house with 15 rooms was also given to the Protestant Church of Luxembourg by the Grand Duchy.

We may point out the following characteristics of the Luxembourg Protestant Church:

1. It has a strong minority consciousness as a church in an overwhelming non-Protestant environment. The Protestants form not only a religious, but also a social group.
2. Luxembourg has an important international location. It is the capital of a country and also the capital of the European Coal and Steel Community. This means that the diplomatic representatives of the Protestant countries often attend church services.
3. There is also an American military cemetery in Luxembourg where nearly 6,000 soldiers of the Third Army, including General Patton, are buried. The majority of the American dead are Protestants and the bishop officiated at their burial.
4. Luxembourg is also a tourist center; many tourists come from all over the world, and some attend the Protestant Divine Services.

Thus this Church has a great opportunity to preach the Gospel and represent Protestantism in an international center.

J. Igor Bella

## Norway

### Letter from the Norwegian Bishops to Church and People

The 1954 Bishops' Conference met at a time that finds the spiritual and church situation in a state of ferment and controversy. Such debates indicate the degree to which the most important questions command general attention, and therefore churchmen will be the last to complain about ferment and controversy. Lively interest and brisk conflict are vastly preferable to the indifference that so frequently characterizes modern man! The fact that people are disturbed, that they raise questions, are afraid and depressed, is but a sign that He who said He had come to bring a sword and not peace is close at hand.

In this situation the Bishops' Conference turns to Church and people to speak openly of what, in our opinion, everyone must be told if the Church is to be a true Church and truly serve the people.

#### I

The first matter concerns the Church's message.

We have referred to Jesus' saying that He had not come to bring peace, but a sword. But, as Luther used to say, that is the "unwonted" preliminary deed that Christ must accomplish. Christ's proper task is to answer the questions and allay all anxiety. And in all periods and situations Christ's Church must communicate Jesus Christ as God's answer, God's peace, and God's power.

But the Church may not turn into a rallying-point for ferment and controversy, a reservoir of internal vagueness and dissension. Surely the Lord of the Church, and men as well, have a right to expect the Church to know what she stands for and to give a clear answer. Any Church who herself falls prey to internal strife or speaks to please men rather than give them truth has betrayed her calling and will not be able

to command the respect of men. For the Church has one Lord, Christ, and one authority, His word. This is the essential sign of the Church and gives her the right of existence. This is the unalterable ground and norm for whatever she does and preaches.

There are two sides to the message thus entrusted to the Church. One is the *Law*—the commandments and regulations for life, set up by the Creator and Lord Himself which must not be violated or disregarded if life is not to suffer and, finally, perish. We are all subject to this Law—for we were all created by *one* God, and we are all answerable to Him. But no one can apprehend this Law on his own, nor can anyone claim that we obey it as we should. No generation has experienced this more plainly in its own body and soul than ours; technically we know and can master more of the laws of nature than any other race before us, but today we live closer than ever before to fear and destruction, because we do not respect the spiritual and moral laws which God established for human life.

Surely you cannot reprimand the Church if, in this situation, she calls upon our contemporaries to respect God's Law. On the contrary, she would deserve serious blame did she *not* warn and admonish as her calling demands. She must examine herself over and over again to discover whether she has been sufficiently obedient and authoritative in her guardianship over the nation's spiritual health. There is no area of life that ought not to be placed under the light of God's Law—from sexual behavior to the administration of justice, from children's education to the relationship of state and church. Whoever rejects the Law because he regards it as severe and would prefer to have it otherwise, acts irresponsibly and unrealistically.

But the Church does deserve censure where she represents the Law merely as an exaction and a burden without making it clear that even the Law already expresses God's *care* for the creation He loves. And we confess in the name of the Church that we have

frequently fallen short in this. We did not state as lucidly and as warmly as we ought to have done that God's severity ever serves God's loving kindness.

Above all, we confess that we have done too little to proclaim the second part of the message—the *Gospel* of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ to all who submit to God's sacred truth and irrevocable claim and who know that they cannot deliver themselves. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That is not just "the little bible", it is the *whole* Bible. Christ did not come to demand, but to give; not to be served, but to serve; not to condemn, but to deliver. Where this is truly proclaimed and heard, there men will receive power from God to turn back and to believe.

Thus speaks the Word of God, and thus should the Church speak, true to the Word. The grave words about damnation should be placed and viewed in this light. It is here, if ever, that we confront matters in the face of which *our* wisdom fails and which leave us humbly listening to Him who has knowledge. With a gravity to make us quake and with such authority as silences us all, He tells us that there are two possible ways a human life may end; He uses the most forceful expressions in order to leave no doubt how final and frightening one of them is. But at the same time He asserts that "from the foundation of the world" we have been destined, not for this but for something totally different. And He who says all this is He who died for all of us, who spoke and died in order that none of us should be lost.

God alone can know how many rebel against this message because they lightly defy truth and their conscience and how many do so because the proclamation of the message was not exclusively inspired by love. This is the special, enormous responsibility resting on one who proclaims the Word, and it goes beyond any responsibility that we all bear for our personal decision of faith.

## II

The second matter we want to discuss is the question of the *state's relationship to the Church* when the Church's nature and message are at stake.

This question was thoroughly considered and fought out by the Norwegian Church during the war years. But because of the memorandum on constitutional law which appeared almost a year ago, followed by the additional recommendation of the ministry for church affairs, it has again become acute with unexpected ruthlessness and rapidity. Actually it should suffice to refer to *Kirkens Grunn* (the fundament of the Church), the confession and declaration of Easter 1942 which served as a basis for the Church's attitude during the war and towards the clergy's resumption of their state-church offices afterwards.

The values represented by the folk or state-church are deeply and gratefully appreciated by congregations and ministers alike, and there is thus very little inclination to break with established practices. At the same time, everyone should realize that the occupation and the post-war years have more clearly defined the limit within which a state church is possible and justifiable. This line is drawn by the Lord of the Church Himself and by the authority which the Church has in the Word of God. Any state power controlling the Church's confession, her message, and her internal life will always be unacceptable—regardless of whether such domination is forced upon the Church by an illegal political authority as happened during the occupation, or whether it is regarded as legally permissible for a legitimate state authority, as in the above-mentioned legal opinion. The latter case would create a doubly difficult situation, since the untenable would bear the stamp of legitimacy.

At several points the above memorandum undoubtedly exceeds endurable limits: for instance, it frees the government of any obligation to confer with qualified church authorities even

on expressly spiritual matters; it regards government as competent to alter church rituals, to rescind rules for ordination, etc. Violation of the demarcation line becomes most obvious, however, where government is granted liberty to interfere in the area of message and confession, that is, to delete certain points of doctrine from religious instruction.

The gravest question in this connection, however, is whether the Royal Resolution of February 19, 1954, and the ministerial recommendation upon which it was based, did actually overstep the boundary line following the lead of the legal Opinion. In many quarters the matter was interpreted as if the state directors of the Church had interfered with the Church's internal life and usurped the right to "authorize" a doctrine that is contrary to the clear wording on damnation of Scripture and confession.

We hold that it is not *necessary* to interpret matters this way, and we do not think that the state authorities intended to dispose of God's Word or the confession. But because the ministerial recommendation failed to set forth the actual authority of the Church in such basic decisions, and because of the form given to this decision, it was admittedly quite *possible* to interpret it as legalizing a doctrine not in accord with Scripture and the confession.

Contemplating this possibility, we as leaders of the Church feel compelled to declare without qualification that the Church can never recognize the right of the State to give instruction on matters pertaining to the content of the confession. The same applies to the issue under discussion. Now and always the Church must declare null and void any decision that disregards the word of Christ — no matter from what administrative body it may derive. This is not a matter of men's right to freedom of opinion, but of Christ's divine glory.

It cannot be concealed that the post-war period has brought about various tensions between church and state in Norway. Those who are glad about this appear, however, to be few in number. The majority of Church and

people recognize how desirable it would be, if all goodwill and all good forces were to reach the highest measure of co-operation for the benefit of the land which we all love. As churchmen we shall not shrink from determining the guilt by which we ourselves have contributed to the difficulties which now encompass us. But one thing is certain: not merely the Church, but the whole people will be served best if the Church remains spiritually free of any temporal lords in order to serve loyally the one heavenly Lord and His Word. All history testifies to this—not least the grievous and varied history now barely ten years behind us.

### III

The Church has the liberty and the duty to look back upon her history, modern as well as that further back. But there is only one part of history that is authoritative for the Church, that which deals with Jesus Christ and His apostles, which we encounter in the New Testament. Apart from this, the Church reads history only to gather experience to help her serve the people better today and tomorrow. The Church's road lies *ahead*, and it must be *positive*. That is the third matter of which we have to remind Church and people.

Yet that is not what a large part of the people see in the Church. Their imagination tends to see, instead, something like negative mentality of protest combined with superannuation. Of course, it is easy to show how unjustified such a summary judgment is and how little understanding it shows for those aspects of the Church that forbid her to accommodate herself to the fashions and moods of the times. To be sure, it is a good thing for the Church to listen to the right voices of criticism, even among opponents. We must confess that at times we have been satisfied with protesting where we should instead, or in addition, have committed ourselves by positive action. It is good that we should examine to what

extent we ourselves are to blame when nowadays people believe that the problem of church and state is closest to our heart or that we regard a proper notion of damnation as most important of all.

It is crucial for the Church to be able to perceive just which human situation requires help and what sort of aid is necessary. The help—which we have already discussed—always comes to the same thing: spiritual health for the people and eternal redemption of souls through sincere preaching of God's Law and the Gospel. But do modern men stand in need of this? And can we give it to them?

The people of the Western world are a race that has long been turning from God and eternity. The apostle has said that a Christian does not have his eye on the things that are seen but the things that are unseen, since the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal. The very opposite could only too often be applied to the race to which we belong. It has before its eyes not the things that are unseen, but the visible; for the unseen is eternal and therefore unreal, while the things that are seen are transient, palpable and, therefore, real. Such a man sees himself, his body and material environment. But he sees no God whom he can fear and love and on whom he can depend, no norm that he can respect and follow, no eternal goal for which he can aim. The final consequence of such an outlook is the loss of the individual's dignity.

But for a long time already this has essentially been the way in which the white race has carried on its science, fostered its art, allowed its children to grow up, ground through its working week, killed its Sunday, allowed life to run in its rut, and went to its grave with resignation.

Yet at the same time—and this applies not least to our people, too—this race has been unable to break away from its sacred heritage, from its regard for the Church, and from its Christian usage but to this very day has held on to its folk church, celebrated its Christmas, baptized its children and prayed

with them at night, called upon God when things came to a head, and called the pastor to the death-bed and the bier.

But more than that; we have become increasingly aware that space without God is empty, that life without a norm is uncertain, and that death without eternity is meaningless. We noticed this first and most strongly in science. In the midst of her fantastic conquests, she began to feel her limitations and her impotence in the face of forces she herself had unleashed. We noticed the revulsion in literature when it began to discover the hollowness of what had seemed dawning wisdom and beckoning liberation some thirty years before. The sudden change was most significant among young people who quite simply began to ask for information on what is true and right, not only more courageously but also with greater modesty than perhaps any previous young generation. Most astonishing, however, was the attitude of ordinary people who, despite the influence of materialist theories of life, one day caught themselves paying homage to "reference for life" and singing "Go fight for all that you have loved and shield it with your life".\*

One might simply say that the axiom about man's "incurable" religiosity has once again proved its validity. This was not due to the Church or the efforts of any great man, it was simply a confirmation that God's laws remain in force and that His promises are fulfilled. For the Church this is a challenge and an opportunity which require the right response. This response is a *living faith and deeds of service*.

Faith is a personal thing, a force hidden in the heart. At the same time faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Yet such it can be only when it

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\* This is a reference to an incident which occurred in Oslo when Albert Schweitzer visited the city in November 1954 to give his Nobel lecture. A large crowd, led by students, collected before the Town Hall and sang the above-quoted hymn when Schweitzer appeared on the balcony.

is united faith, incarnate and manifest in the congregation that lives together in mutual love in loyalty to God's Word and Sacrament. Only thus can the faithful render true witness to the joy of God's kingdom before the Norwegian people. We just cannot witness effectively to it as long as we hold God's commandments and God's gift of a Sunday in contempt like all the world, or lend half an ear to "listen to the worship service" on the radio instead of taking our place in the assembly of the congregation. The restoration of Sunday and a renewal of worship among all Christians might, with God's help, begin the revival among the people for which we all are waiting.

But the testimony must find its way out of the Sunday assembly into the people and into every-day life as *action in service*. It is indeed good, even necessary, to be zealous for true doctrine and pure preaching, but the people will never fully respect the Gospel nor be induced to listen to it earnestly until we show equal zeal in living according to God's commandment and in serving our neighbor and our community with all that we are and own.

And therefore we turn once more to the whole nation whom the Church must serve, and ask: Please demand much of the Church! Both God and the people have a right to claim this. But do not ask anything except what God demands. He expects His Church to be a loyal steward of His Law and His Gospel; He expects vital faith and serving deed. That is also what the Church desires. Forgive her where she falls short in this task, help her to serve in freedom and with frankness—for the temporal and eternal good of our people!

Bishops' Conference at Oslo, November 17, 1954.

Johannes Smemo  
Arne Fjellbu  
Ragnvald Indrebo  
Johannes Smidt  
Wollert Krohn-Hansen  
Bjarne Skard  
Karl Marthinussen  
Alf Wiig

## Germany

### A Pastoral Letter for the New Year

On January 7, Dr. Otto Dibelius, Bishop of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, addressed the following message to the pastors and congregations of his diocese:

The year which we now have entered will, by any human estimation, be a serious and critical one for our people and therefore also for our church. I need not go into details; we are all aware of the world situation. Thus, according to God's will, our church once again faces a severe test.

Above all, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we must give clear and unequivocal testimony to the *loving and peaceful mind* which is demanded of us. The world is ossifying in hostile fronts. The Church knows that by her Lord she is called away from all selfish torpidity and from all striving for outward power. This call she must pass on to all men.

As far as political events are concerned, the members of our church share in the differences of judgment which exist in our nation, as they do also in others. None will blame the other that the verdict of his conscience leads him to conclusions different from his own. Neither do we blame anyone for passionately championing his judgment in public. For after all, the issue is nothing less or more than the life and death of our whole country!

But in two matters we are all of one mind. *First*, we agree that all of us *desire peace*. For ten years our synods have testified to this over and over again. Innumerable voices of individual church members to whom we are used to pay attention have confirmed it. There must never be any doubt, also during the new year, of the church's burning concern that peace be maintained and that those in whose hands lie political decisions strive for peace with all their strength. *Secondly* we all agree that all our hearts beat for one aim: the *reunification* of our homeland. As we have frequently explained, the Church is governed in this by her re-

sponsibility for the spiritual and moral life of our people.

We shall not relax these efforts. The most important condition for an understanding between persons and nations is and will remain simply conversation and not being put off if such talks should not bring immediate results. We have never thought it right that discussions offered by any side whatever should be refused. We have used the occasion of numerous church events to undertake modest efforts to promote *friendly human conversation* across political trenches. We want to continue this in the future, whenever opportunity presents itself. The paths towards agreement have not reached an end. Possibilities still exist to modify some of the present unbearable conditions; perhaps only here or there, to begin with, but this may just possibly slacken the stiff fronts and might eventually lead to complete accord. Let us regard the other person as our brother! If the others cannot do this—we as Christians must! And therefore let us speak to one another!

The peace which is at stake, however, must have a deeper foundation than mere political agreements. That for which we yearn can grow only out of recourse to God. The Church can only beseech God to work His miracle. But as she prays, she can be a living example to the world of one thing: Wherever the dominion of Jesus Christ is recognized, there peace reigns, there anything that resembles intrigue, fear, need for attention, and desire for power is victoriously overcome!

All of us must contribute towards this; the pastors among themselves, those in other offices, and the members of the congregation. All who enter the life of an Evangelical congregation must feel themselves encompassed by an atmosphere of peace. I ask you to try in all earnestness to achieve this in the new year.

Another matter is no less important: *That wherever the validity of the Gospel is at stake, we stand with all firmness by what has been entrusted to us.* It will be a part of this task to pre-

serve the orders of our Church from all secularization and all haziness.

We now find ourselves face to face with a new attempt to introduce a *secular youth dedication ceremony*. We are all too well acquainted with this youth dedication from past experience. It assumes different forms, but it always means the same thing: Youth is to render allegiance to a materialistic ideology, which is clearly opposed to the Christian Gospel. Our church order states clearly and succinctly: "Children who participate in any ceremony which conflicts with Confirmation (such as a Youth Dedication rite) cannot be confirmed."

This stand must be categorically upheld. Neither the pastor, nor the parish council, nor the Superintendent may make any exceptions. Parents and children must be informed in good time about what is at stake. Certainly many are not fully aware of the conflict between Confirmation and Youth Dedication and think they can reconcile one with the other. Any such doubt must be removed. It must be removed with the conscientious consideration for the conviction of others which is a matter of course for Christians. But all concerned must be faced with the clear either-or: Children who report for the Youth Dedication rite cannot be confirmed! They leave the communion of those who participate in the Holy Supper of our Lord and who may take up the responsibility of a godparent (sponsor)!

At a *time of decision*, many people will inevitably abandon our sacred heritage. It burdens our heart when that happens all about us. And we shall do our utmost to see that no one who stands in temptation to be disloyal to his Church is left without pastoral counsel and encouragement. But times of decision are ever times when the Church gains spiritual strength. We have already experienced this. By the help of God we shall experience it again.

May God grant all of us for this new year the Spirit whom He has promised His own: The Spirit—not of fear, but of power and of love and of discipline!

## BOOK-REVIEWS

### *History and Theology of Worship*

Karl Ferdinand Müller and Walter Blankenburg, ed., *Leiturgia: Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes* (Handbook of Evangelical Worship) with a preface by the Lutheran Liturgical Conference of Germany. Vol. I. *Geschichte und Lehre des evangelischen Gottesdienstes* (History and Doctrine of Evangelical Worship), Johannes Stauda Verlag: Kassel, 1954. 536 pp.

This broadly designed handbook is an indispensable tool for the study of Evangelical worship. The now completed first volume contains contributions by Rudolf Stählin on the history of Christian worship, by Peter Brunner on the doctrine of worship, by Gerhard Langmaack on worship setting, and, finally, by Gerhard Kunze, on the time of worship.

The task "to treat the history of Christian worship from the Early Church to the present time" within 80 pages surely was not an easy one. In praise of Rudolf Stählin's contribution, it must be said that he has solved his assignment brilliantly. At that, he does not merely present historical material, but also provides actual insight into the theology of worship throughout its historical development. This makes his contribution exceedingly well-worth reading, but also highly controversial. Stählin interprets historical development from a given theological point of view. But this latter is by no means as self-evident as the author seems to assume.

Stählin finds the starting point of his historical account in the Lord's saying: "Do this in remembrance of me." The various forms of liturgy present a colorful variety in the fulfilment of this command which is the formative principle "tying together the various liturgies". At the same time, it is "the critical principle against which must be measured whatever the Church has later created out of Christ's gift".

The validity of this starting point may be doubted; even more certainly must we reject the exegesis of this passage which makes it imply "that the Lord's Supper is concerned with pleading the crucifix and its sacrifice before God". For this exegesis provides the basis for introducing as definitive a later interpretation, while the words of institution themselves are not given a hearing. In addition, we must raise the question whether a study of Christian worship ought to be based so exclusively on the service of Holy Communion as the normative worship event. Certainly, this would not give sufficient consideration to the command to missionize and would thus represent a dangerous limitation of the congregation's acts of worship.

Pope Gregory the Great represents for Stählin both the apex and the turning-point of the history of worship. Not until after his time does the sacrifice of gifts shift towards the sacrifice of the Mass. Stählin evidently finds little amiss in the development from the days of early Catholicism up to the time of Gregory. This, of course, is connected with the fact that he interprets the *repraesentatio* idea right into the New Testament text without seeing that this early medieval interpretation already contains within it the concept of a sacrificial mass.

"The revision of worship in the realm of the Lutheran Church did not initiate a new, creative beginning in the area of liturgy." This critical sentence opens the account of the age of the Reformation, and a similar one concludes the treatment of Luther's German Mass. What is said to sum up Lutheran church order also points in the same direction, a direction which in turn can be understood only on the basis of Stählin's questionable presuppositions. Where those are lacking, it is not too hard to find an abundance of "creative beginning" and of "constructive display of the liturgical as such".

Brief sketches of the Reformed, the Anglican, and the post-Tridentine Ro-

man liturgy, as well as of the modern movements of liturgical revival, close the historical study.

Peter Brunner's "Zur Lehre vom Gottesdienst der im Namen Jesu versammelten Gemeinde" (On the doctrine of worship of the congregation assembled in the name of Jesus) is, beyond doubt, the most valuable contribution in the first volume. The title indicates how Brunner determines the nature of worship: namely, from the point of view of the New Testament concept of assembly. The place of worship is determined first of all by the history of salvation, then anthropologically, and finally, cosmologically. "Thus the worship of the Church occurs in a threefold 'in-between': between the assumption and the return of Jesus; between man's death in baptism and his bodily death; between the superhuman, heavenly creatures and the non-human, earthly creatures."

But the core of this study is found in the second part which treats of the event of salvation in worship. This event of salvation has a double rhythm: God's forgiveness of the sins of man and man's sacrifice of praise to God ("God's service for the congregation" and "the congregation's service for God"). Brunner distinguishes between the Word which "lays the foundation" ("grundlegend") and that which "builds" ("aufbauend"), and he describes the various forms of proclamation of the Word. Anamnesis is the main concept in the event of salvation in the proclamation of the Word. Anamnesis ties the one-time unique event to the present. The main concept for the event of salvation in the Holy Communion is "effective *repraesentatio*". This, of course, is connected with that of anamnesis, but it gains its particular accent in that anamnesis occurs in the distribution of bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. By this distribution the unique event enters our current existence as present reality. It is determinative for the event of salvation in the Communion that it is tied to the institution at Jesus' last supper. This is what gives decisive significance to

consecration. It is because of the central position of the words of institution that Brunner regards the Real Presence as *ante* and *post sumptionem*. But *sumptio* is an indispensable part of the *usus sacramenti*. That is, there can be no Real Presence *extra usum*.

Worship as the congregation's service before God is rooted in the pneumatic obedience of the new man. Worship thus turns entirely into prayer which may be regarded as the "full dimension" of worship. Prayer becomes confession, and that both confession of sins and confession of faith, as well as sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. From this vantage point you might describe worship as the "beginning of the eternal glorification of the triune God."

The last part of this study deals with the structure of worship. With the clarity that characterized the Reformation it sketches the inevitability as well as the eschatological freedom of this structure. Due to the obligation to the Word and to the "neighbor", the possible structures include that which is command and that which is forbidden, as well as (with a view to the neighbor) the voluntary. In his chapter on the realization of structure, Brunner offers an unusually interesting view of the role of art in worship.

We can assent whole-heartedly to Brunner's main concern, the understanding of worship as a part of God's history of salvation. It is to his great credit, in his doctrine of worship, to have placed its discussion into the center of the Christian message itself. His irenic manner of presentation in which there is hardly any place for polemics or for coming to terms with other views does, however, leave a series of questions unanswered. Let us just touch some of these: the relationship between missionary proclamation and congregational worship, the differentiation between the Word as layer of foundation and as builder, the bearing of the *repraesentatio* on the *praesentia Christi* of the Reformation and, finally, the importance of the sacrificial in Brunner's basic concepts.

Yet despite all the questions which should still be directed at Professor Brunner, his contribution provides a new and authoritative foundation for work. Both the theologian in academic work and the parish pastor will be grateful for it.

*Gerhard Langmaack's* contribution on the setting of worship provides interesting insight into the work of the church architect who is to prepare a place for worship. Langmaack begins with his own theological considerations which assert that the act of worship is closely dependent on its place, since worship is not a spiritual happening but consists of the bodily and spiritual action of Word and Sacrament. In worship above all, man must be addressed as *totus homo*.

The functional solution of the problem presented by a room for worship thus becomes a theological demand. In his historical survey, Langmaack shows how the worship building has developed. This enables him to illustrate his thesis that the space is designed according to theological principles. A renaissance after the first World War and, even more, the huge tasks which followed in the wake of the destruction of church buildings during the second World War, have led the art of church architecture unto new paths. Langmaack reprints the so-called Rummelsburg principles, the expression of attitudes held in common in Germany.

Because of its emphasis on the practical side, his study is likely to give many valuable hints to anyone confronted by the tasks of designing a church building. There is one deficiency: merely the German situation is considered. Other Lutheran territories have made essential contributions which have equal claim to representation in such a survey. For, after all, architecture is an international language.

*Gerhard Kunze's* contribution on the time of worship is highly informative. It sees the church year not as an invention, but as alive, organic. Its organic growth is repeatedly illuminated by Kunze's recital. His expert understanding of the extraordinarily difficult

problems involved enables him to show clearly how the church year gradually and steadily developed from early Christianity's observance of Sunday as the festival of Christ's resurrection. He makes it clear what considerations were decisive for this or that arrangement. Here one must be ever mindful of the fact that the church year is not a circle or a ring, but a continuous spiral "which has its center, its motivating force, and its goal in the Lord God".

The attitude of the reformers is briefly reported. The study's last section shows the still unsolved problems in the aspect of the church year. Here Kunze expresses his confidence that "a power embodied in the Reformation's understanding of worship, hitherto latent, now pushes for the development of adequate forms". Thus the church which makes use of the church year must remember that this structure must ever again be filled with living faith and that, at the same time, this faith continues to be active in the constant development of the church year.

The perusal of this dissertation should be of special interest to every preacher, since he himself is at work on this structure. The academic theologian, also, will have to admit that in many details this study convincingly corrects previous views.

The first sections of the second volume which deals with the main service and its forms have been published by now.

V. V.

Gerhard Delling, *Der Gottesdienst im Neuen Testament* (Worship in the New Testament), Vandenhoeck u. Rupprecht: Göttingen, 1952. 174 pp.

New Testament worship is of greatest significance in the face of the current situation in the discussion of the nature of divine worship. In connection with this topic, however, we encounter a series of difficulties which are due, above all, to the scanty of the texts.

The work under consideration fits well with other recent research on the

same topic. In its twelve chapters it touches upon all important issues. It deals, first of all, with the *separation* of early Christian worship from the surrounding Jewish and pagan cults, then with its *meaning* as oikodomé, with the *effects of the Spirit* by which the unity of worship as an eschatological action of God is preserved, despite the many different manifestations. It discusses *structure*, based on the parallelism of heavenly and earthly worship. After this, Delling deals with the various New Testament *formulae*, the trinitarian ones, the doxological, etc. *Confession* and *hymn of praise* are briefly examined. One chapter each is given over to the *Word* (in proclamation and interpretation), to *prayer* (epiclesis, intercession, Lord's prayer, and others), and the *pastoral acts* (Baptism, Lord's Supper, laying on of hands). In addition, the ministerial and other *offices*, the *outward framework* of the services, and the worshipping *congregation* are treated.

As you see from this listing, the book touches on a host of questions concerning New Testament worship. This is both its strength and its weakness. Delling presents a collection of exegetical material ordinarily widely dispersed. That is of great value, even though it simply cannot be avoided, then, that details dominate the inquiry. The author assumes overall knowledge, he does not present it. Moreover, the continuous allusions to the pagan cult during a description of Christian worship encroaches on the clear projection of precisely the specifically Christian features. Nonetheless, the book must be regarded as a fine introduction and a necessary guide in this important area of New Testament research.

V. V.

Vilmos Vajta, *Die Theologie des Gottesdienstes bei Luther* (Luther's theology of worship). Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag: Stockholm, 1952. xx, 375 pp.

The above work, doctoral thesis accepted by the theological faculty of

the University of Lund, represents the Luther Renaissance's most exhaustive contribution to the theology of worship. No other work has analyzed the theological basis of Luther's reforms in this area with equal care and completeness. In the years between the two wars, Allwohn, Knolle, Fendt, and others had tried to arrive at a more sympathetic understanding of Luther's aims and motives in the reform of public worship. By and large they were able to dispel the commonly held prejudice which considers Luther liturgically uninterested, biased, or malinformed. But it remained for this present volume to show the mainsprings of his liturgics with complete thoroughness and clarity and to validate the connection of his thoughts on worship with the whole of his theology.

The author bases his presentation on the antithesis between true worship of God and idolatry. The radical nature of this alternative explains Luther's scathing criticism and incisive reform of the medieval mass. The evangelical emphasis in his interpretation of worship was irreconcilable with the Roman concept of sacrifice and necessitated the ruthless revision of the Canon which he effected.

The second part of the book elucidates these basic thoughts from a twofold perspective. The first chapter describes "Worship as the Work of God" and treats it under the subheadings: "The Proclamation of the Word", "The Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper", and "The Office of the Church as Dispensation of the Gift of God". The second chapter is devoted to "Worship as the Work of Faith". Here the author assigns its proper place to the idea of sacrifice. A concluding paragraph treats of the relation between freedom and order in the church service.

In the present situation where nearly all denominations, especially the Lutheran churches, are wrestling with the problem of liturgical reform, this study is of greatest significance. One could wish the author had considered the details of Luther's practical liturgical reforms at greater length and shown their relation to his theo-

logy of worship. But this very limitation may help to focus our attention more firmly on the basic theological issues laid bare by the reformer. Luther posed the alternative of theolatry versus idolatry so pointedly and applied this concept so consistently that no one can afford to by-pass his liturgies with a shrug. It is to be hoped that Dr. Vajta's presentation will again secure that attention to Luther's theology of worship which it deserves.

U. S. L.

Erich Roth, *Die Geschichte des Gottesdienstes der Siebenbürger Sachsen* (the history of worship among the Transylvania Germans), Vol. III in the series *Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte* (research on history of church and dogma), Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1954. 281 pp.

Erich Roth introduces us to the worship life of the "Siebenbürgen Saxons" (Transylvania Germans) over a period of more than 400 years. He is aware that printed orders of church and worship by no means provide exhaustive material for the study of worship history, and so presents truly overwhelming manuscript material that opens up for the reader a wealth of liturgical forms unequalled—this may be stated without exaggeration—in Lutheran Germany.

Moreover, he establishes that even printed agendas in common use do not provide an exclusive source, "since they constitute primarily collections of material. . . Orders of worship are only of secondary importance in them" (p. 145). Roth gives his attention to the agenda of 1547, that of 1653 and its—as he says, unfortunate—revision of 1748. We learn that these agendas (especially the last-mentioned) failed to establish themselves in their own homeland. For German Lutheran agendas were also in common use; and indeed, though this territory, the land of the Transylvanians, is comparatively small, it exhibits tremendous variety in its worship services. The German agendas chiefly used were

the Wittenberg church orders of 1548 and 1559. In addition, many of the hand-written agendas and rubrics which are found (in manuscript) in many printed agendas are based, verbally at times, on German originals.

The author unfolds the full wealth of the types of worship current among the Transylvanian parishes using all his sources — Synodal files. Synodal and parish minutes, and a manuscript agenda from Hermannstadt. They show us an order of worship solidly grounded in the church year, as well as an abundance of special and exclusive liturgical material without parallel in Lutheran Germany. The multiplicity of services is astonishing; they range from a sermon-less matins to a levitic (!) High Mass. "Pre-Reformation tradition underwent considered purging, but without pillage" (p. 242). The sources presented by Roth, all of them dating from the period about 1760, indicate, moreover, that these copious orders still flourished at a time when worship life in Germany was already disintegrating under the influence of the Enlightenment.

The discussion of pastoral acts is less fertile, but only because, here, the Transylvanian orders show a close relationship to German Lutheran models.

But the disintegration of the orders of worship could not be stayed, even in Transylvania. It set in about 1800, that is barely 50 years after the date of the above-quoted sources, and reached its apex during the second half of the century when Germany already saw the first stirrings of the forces of liturgical restoration. The Enlightenment penetrated even here and, in the end, produced "almost a state of chaos" (p. 253). Nothing but remnants and fragments remain of the former wealth.

We are not told of any reform, any new beginning such as was initiated in Germany. Of course, the Transylvanian parishes that have passed before our inward eye in the history of their worship no longer exist. But we can and must learn from their liturgical heritage which Erich Roth has opened up for us.

H. W.

## Ecumenism

Eivind Berggrav, *Kirkene lenges: Hendiger og spenninger i eningsverket* (the Churches yearn: successes and difficulties in the work for unity), Forlaget Land og Kirke: Oslo, 1952, 106 pp. (German translation by Albrecht Schauer and Günther Ruprecht, *Es sehnen sich die Kirchen: Erfolge und Hindernisse auf dem Wege zur Einheit*, Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1953. 88 pp.)

This book is a published version of lectures which Berggrav gave at Oslo University and deals in popular form with current ecumenical problems.

To begin with, Berggrav confronts the example of the Church of South India with that of the "atom church" at Los Alamos, New Mexico. In the former he sees a church union which is still to be realized by growing together; in the latter, one which regards itself as already complete and, by misunderstanding Christian liberty, permits all things and thus, finally, dissolves itself.

The author then deals with the so-called non-theological factors in the separation of the churches. His acute psychological insight and, especially, his sense of humor, characterize the account. He entitles the description of the various types of churches, the so-called "catholic" and the so-called "protestant", "Spontaneity and Stability". He delves particularly into the question of apostolic succession and the Norwegian church's attitude to this. Concerning the problem of the Lord's Supper, he gives his support to "open communion". In his last chapter he answers the question, "how and when is unity conceivable?" by stating that hardly any church might dare assert that she alone holds the truth. A consequence of this is a need not only for patience but also for a struggle for truth. "Strict commitment at the centre, great freedom on the periphery and in the forms" is Berggrav's soundly Lutheran guiding principle.

As always, Berggrav's account is simple and impressive. The only ques-

tion we might raise is why he cannot regard South Indian unity as critically as the negotiations between the Scandinavian and Anglican churches, and whether his "soundly Lutheran guiding principle" for unity ought not to require a certain reserve in the question of "open communion". But on the whole, Berggrav's booklet is to be highly recommended to all who want to co-operate in the ecumenical movement.

V. V.

Conrad Bergendoff, *The One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church*, Augustana Book Concern: Rock Island, Illinois, 1954. xi, 99 pp.

"Believing that this is still the most valid of definitions, I am proposing to consider the unity of the Church from the viewpoint of apostolicity, holiness, and catholicity. This will reveal, I believe, the meaning of unity. In brief, the unity of the Church in which the Christian confesses his faith is the unity of a church which is holy, catholic, and apostolic."

This is Bergendoff's main thesis in his new publication. He points out that differences between the churches of the Reformation resulted "from a lack of agreement as to what God has revealed and what man may choose". The question we must therefore be willing to discuss, with regard to the unity of the Church is: "What are the apostolic elements of faith on which agreement is necessary?" With reference to the holiness of the Church, Bergendoff pleads for agreement on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. In a certain sense, the Reformation doctrine of justification is a doctrine on the nature of holiness. Bergendoff regrets that the word "Catholic" has been changed into "Christian" in Protestant usage of the Creeds. He also examines the claim of the historic episcopate and urges that this issue be removed into the realm of tradition where it has a certain legitimacy. The concepts of apostolicity, holiness, and catholicity should be the basis for judging the validity of all proposals for

Christian unity. In this connection, Bergendoff warns of the illusion that there ever has been organizational unity of the Church. On the other hand, there always has been spiritual unity, even among organizationally divided churches: "The achievement of the ecumenical endeavor is not in the creation of this underlying, unbroken, eschatological unity, but in its discovery, and in the insistence that this unity requires expression in the churches who confess it."

Bergendoff's lectures witness to his wide historical knowledge and to a deep insight into the ecumenical question. It is worth listening to him, even though many queries (e. g. on the meaning of the "unity of love") can be raised in the face of his considerations.

V. V.

Karl Adam, *One and Holy*, translated by Cecily Hastings. Sheed and Ward: London and New York, 1954. viii, 102 pp. Title of the German original: *Una Sancta in katholischer Sicht*, Patmos Verlag: Düsseldorf, 1948. 144 pp.

This little book contains lectures given by a well-known Roman Catholic theologian whose desire it is to create reciprocal understanding between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Analyzing the history of the Reformation, Adam admits certain abuses in the medieval church, just as does J. Lortz, to whom he constantly refers. In Adam's opinion, Luther's tragedy was that he did not remain within the Church, that is, the church which was founded on the primacy of the Pope and on apostolic succession. Thus Luther became a heretic and the Reformation was turned into a "revolution" that could not be tolerated.

Adam is well aware of the fact that the Reformation was not merely a reaction against certain conditions in the papacy and in church life, but had deeper roots in the controversy concerning true doctrine. That is why the breach between the churches could not be healed even after the abuses were

remedied. However, Adam asserts that Luther's doctrine consisted of his own subjective experience. It is somewhat amazing to learn from him, in this connection, that Luther's theology was "a theology of subjective selection". He arrives at this conclusion by citing Jesus' teaching *against* that of St. Paul. The fact that no such difference existed for Luther is ignored by the book. On the other hand, Adam does grant Luther the right of opposition, if only against an Ockhamist misinterpretation of the Church's doctrine. He admits that "wide tracts of Luther's thought were simply Catholic"; however, Lutheran orthodoxy eliminated these elements from his theology. Adam visualizes the possibility of a new rapprochement through the exclusion of these orthodox elements and a return to Luther himself. Naturally this does not imply that Adam agrees with Luther, even though he fully recognizes the latter's religious personality. For all that, a solution is conceivable to him only on the basis of a church directed by the Holy See, with her unity embodied by the Pope.

Adam also endeavors to show how tradition, e.g. Mariology, derives from the reality of Christ and could therefore not present an obstacle to those who confess *Sola Scriptura*. Thus, finally, he expresses the hope that individuals, at least, will find the way back to Rome as the only Church.

Adam's book is interesting to study as a popular summary of contemporary Roman Catholic thought, or at least a considerable segment of it. Any discussion therefore should be directed not so much at this little volume as at that whole school of Roman theologians. The fact that even this study asserts the claim of the Papal See to be a foundation of Christ, that it confirms post-scriptural development of doctrine and, consequently, salvation by Christ or also by additional means, is proof that the Reformation has still not gained any right within the Roman Church. Moral corruption may have been overcome, but the question asked of Rome on the issue of *faith* still remains.

V. V.

## Editions of Luther

Erwin Müllhaupt, ed., *D. Martin Luthers Evangelien-Auslegung* (Interpretation of the Gospels), Part III: *Markus- und Lukasevangelium* (Mark 1—13; Luke 3—21), Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1953, 396 pp. Part IV: *Das Johannes-Evangelium mit Ausnahme der Passionstexte* (Gospel of St. John, excepting the Passion texts), revised by Eduard Ellwein, Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1954. 638 pp.

These two volumes complete the five-volume edition of Luther's interpretation of the Gospels, an accomplishment which we welcome most enthusiastically. Those still unfamiliar with the work should know that it consists of a selection from Luther's writings in which he interprets the Gospels. The chief material for this is, of course, provided by his sermons. From the large number of the reformer's sermons such as are most truly typical of him have been carefully selected, both from his early and his later period. The texts of the Weimar edition have been transposed into modern German and were translated where necessary. Use is made also of texts from a considerable number of Luther's writings, letters, and table-talks.

All this offers particularly important aid to a preacher's preparations, for Luther not only presents him with a host of ideas for the interpretation of the pericopes, but he also clarifies and distils his own thoughts. At the same time, Luther's manner of preaching is unsurpassed in its simplicity and honesty. He knows how to proclaim the one theme of the gospels: "Christ our justification", in ever new variations.

The book is an important help also to one who is specifically at work on Luther's theology; though he might wish that his task had been made easier still by marginal references to the Weimar edition. One might even use these volumes as devotional books, just as Luther's *Postils* have served

this purpose for centuries. In short, the work under consideration will be useful to anyone who wishes to hear the Gospel, no matter in which manner. That is why we should like to recommend it warmly to one and all. V. V.

Martin Luther, *Wider den Löwener Theologen Latomus* (versus Latomus, theologian of Löwen), published as Vol. VI, supplementary series (*Ergänzungsreihe*) of *Ausgewählte Werke* (Selected Works), H. H. Borchardt and Georg Merz, ed., Chr. Kaiser Verlag: Munich, 1953. 184 pp.

The well-known Munich edition of Luther's Selected Works, now being reprinted for the third time, offers a German translation of Luther's important *Wider Latomus* in its supplementary series. It is gratifying that this otherwise rarely known work is thus made available to a wider circle of readers. In it, the reformer touches on basic issues of Christian theology. While in other writings where Luther follows up his opponents' line of argument this proves detrimental to his construction, this disputation against Latomus is peculiarly lucid and unified. The work presents rich source material on Luther's hermeneutics.

The main issues which here concern him are the preservation of the purity of the Gospel in the doctrine of the Church, contention with the scholastic concept concerning the human possibilities of fulfilling the commandments and, finally and above all, the question of sin in relation to so-called good works and the life of a Christian. (The interpretation both of Romans 7 and of the thesis "*simul iustus et peccator*" plays a considerable part here.) The treatment of those matters is rooted with systematic clarity in Luther's total understanding of the Gospel.

Robert Frick not only provides an excellent translation, but also a helpful introduction together with textual notes. With this edition, the publishers have stimulated renewed study of the work. This in itself deserves commendation. V. V.

## Foreign Mission and Confessionalism

Matthias Simon, *Mission und Bekenntnis in der Entwicklung des Evangelisch-Lutherischen Centralmissionsvereins für Bayern* (Foreign Mission and Confessionalism in the development of the Evangelical-Lutheran Central Mission Society of Bavaria), Freimund-Verlag, Neuendettelsau, 1953. 179 pp.

Ruf, Walther, ed.: *Lutherisches Missionsjahrbuch 1953/4* (Lutheran Missions Yearbook), obtainable through the Rev. H. Pickel, Rugendorf (Ofr.) b. Stadtsteinach, with DM 3.50 payable to his postal checking account Munich 990 14. 218 pp.

This latest work by Matthias Simon, distinguished historian of the Bavarian Lutheran Church is, first of all, an important contribution to Bavarian church history. It has been fashioned as carefully and on as broad a foundation of sources as we have come to expect from this author.

The title does, indeed, promise more than a mere piece of local church history, and this promise, too, is completely fulfilled. Therefore this study should be noted wherever the relationship of Missions and Confessionalism, of Mission and Church in general, becomes an issue. If you allow yourself to be put off by the sometimes overly tortuous course of internal Bavarian church politics which must here be followed, you will miss the fruits of significant insights which were there obtained, as it were, from a working model. At the least they should be able to contribute to a better understanding of an important section of church and mission history.

Let me draw attention to just four points:

1. The "confessional innocence" of the period preceding the 19th century Lutheran awakening, so often idealized, can be a very questionable matter in church and mission. At any rate, the situation in Bavaria shows, similarly to that in Prussia, how much of this

"innocence" must simply be ascribed to the state-church chains into which "the Church is cast by the princes", as Löhe lamented. And the otherwise so capable Rhenius demonstrated in the mission field, against his will, that so-called Protestant freedom of confession may not necessarily be the right foundation even for building a young church. Truly, Erlangen's Hofmann did not penetrate deeply enough when he concluded that the confession-less Baslelites were concerned about heathenism, the Lutherans only about the Lutheran Church (p. 73).

2. No longer should anyone ascribe the Lutheran revival in church and mission merely to obdurate sectarian confessionalism. The initial impulses in Bavaria were, at any rate, of a different nature: the violent suppression of Silesian Lutherans and the massive attempts at anglicanization to which Lutheran missionary work in India was subjected contributed considerably towards a renewal. That in the course of such renewal a church, a de facto Lutheran church, besides, should have its mission work, too, develop away from the Basle direction ought to be understood, primarily, in terms of these historical conditions.

3. It is clear that the Munich High Consistory, advocating, at times, plans for union, did not have its eye on the right forms for salutary work of Church and Mission, at least not under these conditions. On the contrary, much more convincing for precisely the Bavarian situation is Löhe's idea that only if the boundaries between Lutherans and Reformed were respected could they both grasp hands, across this very boundary, in the knowledge of standing in the same sun of God's grace. Whether one should therefore join Simon in regarding the boundaries quite generally as a gift of God (p. 148) may, however, be questionable today, even though one be ready to acknowledge that church union need not be the only possible manner of ecumenical conduct.

4. The most important and most lasting insight to be gained from

this internal Bavarian struggle may perhaps be this: The heart of the Church beats wherever the Church carries on missionary activity. — In the final analysis it was this connection which Hofmann had failed to grasp. In Bavaria it was yet superabundantly underlined by the fact that the active missionary movement actually changed the whole church, and that from the inside. You may be dissatisfied with the forms of this change. You may ask whether concern for unity did not, at times, recede too much into the background for all the concern about the purity of the Church. But you will admit that in Bavaria both church and mission gained depth and vitality through this confessional purification. Forms may alter, accents may change. But this book teaches that Mission and Church belong most intimately together, even and particularly for the sake of the Church. It is a lesson which goes far beyond correcting historical perspectives.

Also the second post war edition of the *Lutheran Mission Yearbook* is distinguished, apart from the high value of individual contributions, by its scope which takes in the whole extent of Lutheran World Mission. There are reports not only from the German fields in Africa, India, and New Guinea, but also from Danish missions in Aden, and the Norwegian work in Madagascar. Statistics of the German, Scandinavian, and North American Mission Societies supplement the reports.

The *Yearbook's* own peculiar significance at the side of the yearbook *Deutsche Evangelische Weltmission* (German Evangelical World Mission) published in Hamburg, is due not least to this glance across frontiers. To be sure, much material is reprinted from the Hamburg yearbook; this raises the question whether coexistence of the two yearbooks in this form is a very happy solution.

Outstanding among the many excellent contributions is the church-historical one. Here W. Maurer, for the topic "The Lutheran Church and her (Foreign) Mission", traces the whole

path from Luther to Harless and Petri in clear lines and with superior knowledge of the subject. With all desirable distinctness he gives the reasons why the foreign missions of the Lutheran Church have been and still are *Lutheran* missions.

To supplement anything that can be said on Luther and his alleged "lukewarmness towards missions" I should, finally, refer to an article by Hermann Dörries ("Luther und die Heidenpredigt", [Luther's attitude to preaching the Word to heathens], *Mission und Theologie*, F. Wiebe, ed., Göttingen, 1953, p. 61, ff.) At the present stage of Luther research it seems to speak the final word on this matter. H. W. G.

### *Systematic Theology*

Gunnar Hillerdal, *Gehorsam gegen Gott und Menschen: Luthers Lehre von der Obrigkeit und die moderne evangelische Staatsethik* (Obedience towards God and Man: Luther's doctrine of the higher powers and modern Evangelical political ethics), Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsen Bokförlag: Stockholm, and Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht: Göttingen; printed Lund, 1954. 320 pp.

As the sub-title indicates, this study deals with Luther's doctrine of temporal authority. This it does in such a manner that, first of all, both powers are portrayed together as the two sides of God's struggle against the devil. Then worldly power is examined from the viewpoint of "authority and justice", the account of the reformation of law and justice by God's "heroes" (*virii heroici*) being particularly interesting. The author also touches on the right use of the sword and on legislation in matters of religion. Finally, there are descriptions of man under God's authority, of the subject (under a ruler), and of justice. This includes a discussion of obedience towards God and men and also of the right to resist; Luther's

view is set forth, according to which no subject is to raise the sword against authority, with the sole exception of the "heroes".

The second part of the study presents some modern theologians and their doctrine of the state. From among those who claim to represent Luther's view today, Hillerdal selects W. Elert, P. Althaus, and Fr. Gogarten. Of Luther's critics, the representatives of so-called christological ethics (K. Barth, A. de Quervain, and J. Ellul) are discussed.

The verses Romans 13:1-7 are accorded a detailed exegesis. The angelological interpretation of the passage is rejected as uncertain and as unsuitable for dogmatic conclusions. Thus Hillerdal makes the crucial question one of exegesis from which level he attacks Barth's position. For he claims that the very aspect of a struggle which Barth so emphatically rejects is not at all a specifically Lutheran interpretation, but quite generally according to Scripture. The christology thus arrived at has far-reaching consequences for ethics. In Barth, Hillerdal recognizes a cosmological approach which cannot but reduce to triviality the struggle between God and Satan in this world. Thus Barth's attempt at a christological foundation of political ethics must be regarded as a failure. The only principle for constructing an ethic is the doctrine of Law and Gospel which makes faith and love of neighbor the basis of action demanded of man. Hillerdal also criticises Elert, Althaus and Gogarten from this vantage point, establishing their legalistic tendency, since they rationally derive the demands of order from the order itself, instead of from love of neighbor.

Hillerdal's work presents a host of new ideas and associations in both exegesis and systematics. Even though his judgments appear surprisingly radical at times, his line of thought, based on exegesis, is always convincing. The book will undoubtedly receive much attention in theological discussion.

V. V.

Gustaf Wingren, *Teologiens metodfråga* (The issue of method in theology), C. W. K. Gleerups Förlag: Lund, 1954. 224 pp.

Gustaf Wingren's latest book deals with the question of theological methods by discussing three modern theologians: Anders Nygren, Karl Barth, and Rudolf Bultmann. Wingren had hinted at this task in his book *Predikan* (Preaching) of 1949, and thus the present work should be regarded as related closely to the earlier one. Wingren here examines those presuppositions of theological work which influence the actual treatment of theological problems. He is after the framework, the total view; that which creates the pattern governing each theologian's given material. Therefore, this has turned into a critical book, more trenchant and of greater passion than Wingren's previous writings.

The first part of the treatise discusses the anthropological presuppositions of the three eminent European theologians. Wingren considers Nygren's Critical Philosophy insufficient in dealing with historical material; *agape* could never answer a philosophical question but is ever determined by man's guilt.

Barth's approach is governed by the ontological difference between God and man. The Gospel, however, constitutes deliverance and salvation; thus it presupposes the existence of a power hostile to God, which Barth denies. Everything with him is concentrated in the noëtic question: how man achieves cognition of God by "revelation". Into this framework, unbiblical in Wingren's opinion, Barth introduces the biblical material which never does come into its own.

With Bultmann, modern man determines what among biblical assertions is to be permanent. Wingren shows that the treatment of the resurrection in Bultmann's theology is conditioned by Heidegger's view of death. But since Bultmann never asks why it is Christ among all others whom we preach, the name Jesus Christ remains "uninterpretable mythology", it is not dissolved by "existential interpretation".

His tie to Heidegger inevitably leads Bultmann to a false interpretation of the heart of the *kerygma*, that is, of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Wingren devotes some searching study to the three afore-mentioned theologians' views of the Law. If it is seen anthropologically, he concludes, right understanding of the Gospel is blocked.

In connection with hermeneutic presuppositions, Wingren deals with Nygren's motive-research. He believes he can prove that in Nygren's discussion of Marcion the wealth of biblical insight itself throws doubt upon the presupposition of his method; for here he speaks of the Gospel as comprehensible only on the basis of the Law. This realization on Nygren's part is, however, "unique", says Wingren, adding that the former's true understanding of the Scripture is impeded by applying a question formulated on the basis of philosophy to the historical material. Along this road, systematics could never provide the basis for truly contemporary ethical commitment nor for an up-to-date interpretation of the word of Scripture.

The predominance of the question of cognition with Barth, on the other hand, means that the incarnation alone takes up the center of the Christian message. This makes it possible to negate certain scriptural assertions. Wingren mentions as examples Barth's negation of evil as an objectively existing power and his criticism of the concepts of the old and the new man. Added to this is Barth's idea of the sign, according to which the external (*res externae*) can only point to God's action but can never be the action itself. Accordingly, his ethic ends by deriving precepts from the Gospel which merely "point" to God "on high". But thus the Gospel would finish up as Law, as Law no longer broken by the Gospel itself. In other words, the Gospel ceases to be the gift of justice.

Finally, Wingren attempts to show that Bultmann's demythologizing spiritualizes the Law. The neighbor and the ethical demands derived from him have to give way to the philosophical

doctrine of the humane (*vom Menschsein*). But this leaves the *kerygma* no content other than that which Heidegger ascribes to the voice of conscience. The less the *kerygma* proclaims the unique event in Christ, the more it takes on the character of exhortation and admonition. The Gospel is replaced by spiritualized law, and thus the true Law is also lost.

Wingren does not intend to present a system of theological method of his own in this book. For him, there is not even such a thing as abstract method; the method is ever determined by the material involved. Wingren merely turns against the attempt to establish a method apart from theological work proper and then to force the Word of God into the frame thus discovered — but this he does with particular passion. It is this very attempt which he observes in the three theologians he analyzes. His judgment says "no" to prevailing methods; the search for a method as such remains a question, an unsolved problem.

The book is deeply relevant to the contemporary theological situation and is therefore likely to rouse considerable interest. One might make an urgent plea for translation. For it should lead to an exciting discussion, not only in Sweden but on the continent as well. You may agree with Wingren or reject him, — in any case you must listen to him. But such listening calls for taking one's own stand.

V. V.

Károly Karner, *Bevezetés a teológiába* (Introduction to Theology), Evangélikus Egyetemes Sajtóosztály: Budapest, 1954. 212 pp.

It gives particular pleasure to be able to hold this new theological publication of Hungarian Lutheranism in one's hands. After the end of the war, K. Pröhle's *Dogmatics*, a whole life's work, was the first to be issued (1948), then followed an interpretation of the gospel of St. John (1950) by the above author. And now we have a third important work which establishes K.

Karner as the most creative and perhaps also the most highly educated of contemporary Hungarian theologians. His introduction to theology enables him to touch on various areas of theological research where he is able to provide not only introductory remarks but also a basic critique.

The book is divided into three sections: "The Theologian and Theology", "Christian Theology", and "The Specialized Branches of Theology", and is intended particularly as a survey and introduction for students. In the first part, the author describes with all the warmth of a pastoral counselor the calling of a minister and his preparation for this service through theology. The second part is made up of a discussion of the concept of theology in its traditional meaning followed by a brief history of theological thought since the Enlightenment, carrying the line of history right up to date. In all this, one can feel the author's difficulties in reproducing concisely the basic characteristics of theologic thought, especially German, in the Hungarian language. This is intended, not as a criticism of the author, but as a general admonition to simplify theological language. (How about German professors making the experiment of *themselves* translating their own thoughts into a foreign language? They would surely meet with many surprises and perhaps also mend their ways a little. *Sit venia verbo!*)

The account of the various fields of theological study is certainly the best part of the book. Karner offers insight into the doctrine of the Word as well as the fundamental issues of hermeneutics. This, naturally, shows that he himself is an exegete and has many wise perceptions to contribute. Moreover, his knowledge takes in the area of church history and systematic theology. Questions both of method and material content are here picked out with the sharp eye of the educator in order to open a window into the workshop of theology to the student, but no less to the pastor and the layman.

Introductions to theology do not abound in our day. Perhaps this simply

indicates that our century's theological re-orientation has not yet affected all areas of theological research and that the achievement of an overall concept is a task still before us. What Karner offers us in this volume does not include any world-shaking theological discovery, but pedagogically, that is in the selection of material and points of view, it is intelligent and truly helpful to anyone concerned with introductory theology. The possibility of making this fine piece of work available to other language groups should be considered; it would certainly be a brotherly service.

V. V.

Regin Prenter, *Skabelse og Genløsning* (Creation and Redemption), *Dogmatik, I—IV*. G. E. C. Gads Forlag: København, 1951—53. 620 pp.

This *Dogmatics* by Prenter is the sort of work which you do not find frequently, especially in Scandinavia, hitherto dominated by Aulén's *Den allmännelige kristna tron* (published in English as *The Faith of the Christian Church*, Philadelphia, 1948). This, the classic dogmatics of the Lundensian school, follows their method of "motive-research", and thus is little more than an introduction to the main periods of the history of Christian thought. Prenter's *Dogmatics*, however, is a true dogmatics, the result of critical thought. To quote Prenter himself, it "perpetually explicates dogma in the light of the task of proclamation, and this by constantly pointing to the testimony of Scripture and ever considering the actual state of proclamation". This determines the task of dogmatics as a critical theological science.

This dogmatics' first section discusses prolegomena. Prenter resolutely refuses to found dogmatic work in philosophy of religion (as do, e.g., Schleiermacher and Nygren); he is also sceptical of any procedure (such as e.g., Schlink's) which commences dogmatic work with an introduction into the content of given confessional writings.

Prenter regards prolegomena as an attempt to examine in the light of dogma itself the authenticity of theology made questionable by the schism of the Church. That is, they are an ecumenical debate on dogmatic authority. That is why the author proceeds from the ecumenical foundation of the Nicene Creed's trinitarian dogma. In the interpretation of this dogma we are first reminded of the connection between creation and redemption foreshadowed in the title. In critical contention with "Roman" and "Protestant" fallacies, this interpretation is carried through in a *catholic* and *evangelical* manner.

Prenter hesitates to use the word "systematic" in describing dogmatic study, since dogmatics is not the development of a logic inherent in any particular view. It is, rather, a critical science, if you keep in mind the reciprocal effects of exegesis and preaching. It compiles "loci", topics that have proved their decisive significance for the content of the Christian message. On this assumption, Prenter can base the development of his dogmatics on the support of his Church's fundamental confession, the Augsburg Confession which provides his outline.

This does not mean, however, that Prenter's work turns out to be an interpretation of this confessional book. It is true that "creation" and "redemption" are subjects which do not simply, in themselves, contain a systematics. Yet when, in Sections II to IV, the author unfolds the whole content of Christian dogma you realize that this is no mere loci-theology but that he reflects with systematic penetration on the undivided unity of God's acts of creation and redemption. Obviously, such "systematics" is something other than the evolution of logical presuppositions; on the contrary, it unfolds the Christian dogma and feels bound by it.

In accordance with the over-all title, this work is made up of two parts; under creation it deals with the "God of creation" and the "man of creation", and after that, under redemption, it is concerned with the "God of redemption" (christology) and the "man of

redemption" (soteriology). This organization is unique in that it discusses "the biblical testimony to the Holy Spirit" under the topic "man of redemption", and in that this same heading also encompasses eschatology (the return and judgment of Christ) under the aspect of "glorification" (the fruit of renewal).

Prenter, indeed, has sound reasons for such a structure, of which the following is undoubtedly conclusive: traditional dogmatics frequently make a false distinction between christology and soteriology or—more simply—between the second and third articles of the creed. The redemption is placed into the past as a historical fact; and while its objectiveness is maintained, something must be *added* for its presence, namely man's path to this source of salvation (*ordo* or *via salutis*); this in turn is supposed to appropriate its subjectivity. To go as far as to express organically the unity of the Holy Spirit's work with that of Christ is a justified protest against this falsification of the redemption. Prenter certainly has succeeded in safeguarding an essential biblical concern, though at the cost of the above-named peculiarity of arrangement. The maintenance of this unity of creation and redemption takes away even every seeming possibility for man to work his own salvation, and this is Prenter's intention.

"Creation and redemption belong together. Creation is the beginning of redemption, and redemption consummates creation." Prenter's dogmatics is contained *in nuce* in this thematic statement. Creation is God's fight against the powers of corruption, it is a present reality which does not permit any metaphysical-cosmological speculations. On the other hand, redemption is the completion of God's creative battle through the incarnation (the having-entered-into-creation) of the Christ by whom man is justified, that is, to whose position in the image of God he is returned. Prenter finds this overall understanding of Christian dogma in the early Church and with Luther, and he furnishes much inter-

esting evidence for this. It would take us too far afield to give details of the congeniality with which Prenter's *Dogmatics* makes use of the insights of the early Church's and the Reformation's theology for contemporary studies in dogma. He does not simply repeat the classic theology of the past. This would be impossible, if only because both orthodoxy and pietism (and rationalism following in the latter's tracks) intervene between the classic epoch and the theologians at work today. Prenter regards both those phenomena as a deformation of Christian dogma which he repudiates by sharp polemic, developing a genuine Reformation (Lutheran!) theology true to the confessions.

Only in one point does his terminology deviate—quite consciously—from Reformation theology: the instance of the doctrine of Holy Communion which is represented as the "sacrificial supper of consummation". The author maintains that, the language of sacrifice being biblical, it ought not to be given up merely because it has been misused in the Roman Church. Surely he is to some extent justified, especially in his opposition to any one-sided criticism of the concept of sacrifice; moreover, by bringing in the biblical understanding of sacrifice, he is able to demonstrate beyond any criticism the evangelical meaning of the Real Presence. The only question we must ask him is whether the sacrifice terminology is really as *central* in Holy Scripture as has recently been so strongly reasserted on the part of Romanists and Anglicans. While you follow Prenter's train of thought, there is little cause for material objections. Yet doubt still remains whether the concept of sacrifice as the *main* aspect of the Lord's Supper actually does express the Bible's intent, or whether there is not much stronger biblical evidence for the Reformation's decision in terms of pneumatic presence. This is not to deny the importance of the author's systematic contribution to this particular question.

In general, it may be said, in Prenter's *Dogmatics* we have been offered a

significant work which, compared to others, shows much originality. But once again we must regret that without translation it will remain more or less inaccessible outside Scandinavia. Yet there can be no doubt that this publication makes a contribution very different from any currently available in German or English.

Something else should be added. Prenter does not write with the absolute claim or authority of a professor of theology. He regards dogmatic work as churchly not only because it is meant to serve the Church, but because it is one of the service functions of the Church herself. He, at least, can practice dogmatics only in communion with the congregation to whom the Word is read and proclaimed and where the Sacraments are administered. Pure doctrine must be attained by conversation between the congregation and the various theological opinions. The worst that can happen to a church—from the stand-point of dogmatics!—is for one doctrinal school to achieve a monopoly. Then the Gospel of the *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* is pushed aside, law enjoys undivided sway and—the Church is negated.

Reading Prenter's *Dogmatics* we are constantly aware that this is the voice of one engaged with his brethren in the Church's conversation, one who strives, together with them, to formulate her dogma. This is precisely why these thoughts have so much more to say to us than any proclaimed by the solitary authority of a teacher; this is why we eagerly wait to see how Prenter will continue this "brotherly conversation" of dogmatics. V. V.

Regin Prenter, *Ordet og Ånden: Reformatorisk kristendom* (the Word and the Spirit: Reformation Christianity), discussions and articles, G. E. C. Gads Forlag: København, 1952. 189 pp.

In this book Prenter has collected a number of essays all of which deal with basic dogmatic questions. The

first one, which gives the volume its title, discusses the issue of Word and Spirit. Prenter notes the dangers of both biblicism and spiritualization and stresses that the Congregation, as God's people on their pilgrimage, can never be in sure possession of Word and Spirit but must continuously receive them as a gift. These ideas are pursued in the essay on "Proclamation and the Biblical Text". The study on "The Bible's Authority in Political and Social Issues" has previously been published in somewhat different form in the symposium *Biblical Authority for Today: a symposium on the biblical authority for the Churches' social and political message today* (Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer, ed., SCM Press: London, 1951). There is an account and critical analysis of Bultmann's demythologizing. The exposition of "The Evangelical Doctrine of Prayer" contains a particularly fine description of the close connection between the nature of the praying community and that of the praying Christ; it is this which allows us to regard and evaluate liturgical prayer—as against so-called "free" prayer—as the one that is truly *free*, that is, free of human achievement.

Two essays on Luther reveal the author's profound understanding of the reformer. In contrast to Holl, he interprets "Word and Sacrament" as one unitary act of God. "Luther's View of Religions" answers the question how Luther was able to grant a certain content of truth even to the idolatrous religions.

There are other interesting contributions on "Does the Church Today Press for a New Reformation?", "Theology and Pedagogy" and, finally, "Sartre's Understanding of Freedom, against the Background of Kierkegaard".

If you expect to encounter in this volume merely the familiar ideas of Prenter's *Dogmatics*, you will be pleasantly surprised. Prenter is master of the art that knows how to present the same problem in a different light, while ever concerned with "Reformation Christianity".

V. V.

## *Church and Works of Mercy*

Herbert Krimm, *Das diakonische Amt der Kirche* (The Church's diaconal charge), Ev. Verlagswerk: Stuttgart, 1953. 546 pp.

Since Uhlhorn's classic work was published in the eighties of the last century, no comprehensive work comparable to his has appeared. While Uhlhorn was able to find sufficient time and quiet to work, to complete his huge undertaking himself, Krimm writes under the burden of the cares of a refugee emergency with few parallels in history. That is why his work had to be in the nature of a collection, with only one article on the "Diaconate in the Early Catholic Church" coming from his own pen.

In the preface, he himself points out that the survey lacks the desired comprehensiveness and balance because, first, the tremendous diaconal effort of North-American Christendom has been allotted too little space (nevertheless, the reviewer wishes to add, it has been given a characteristic and stimulating account); secondly, because a contribution on the diaconal work of the Anglican Church, although promised, unfortunately did not materialize. However, the Roman and the Orthodox Churches are both given the floor in a valuable article on each. About the latter, this provides insight into conditions relatively unknown to occidental Christendom.

But even while Krimm's symposium lacks the stamp of unity and classic proportions that distinguished Uhlhorn's great work, he himself and many of his collaborators write directly out of the situation of distress which, after all, is the outward occasion for the diaconal work of mercy. In brief review one might say what can rarely be said of any symposium—that it is really a lively and challenging book. The introductory bible study, "The service of Jesus", is so essential that I should like to warn the reader not to omit it on the assumption that it will contain only familiar trains of thought.

As to the specialized articles, available space does not permit enumeration of even the most important ones. Let me just mention that it appears that historical research is more reluctant than ever to credit the Christian Church with initiative in the various forms of human welfare in the Imperium Romanum. But wherever the Christian Church appropriated existing forms and methods of work, she undoubtedly seems to have filled them with new and incomparable power. If we take a long step forward into the last century, we are struck by the way Wichern's ideas once again stirred the Evangelical church, urging the congregation to become active in works of mercy.

Such a book appears but once in a generation. We are grateful to the editor that he accomplished a task so difficult in such turbulent times. S. D.

Gerhard Noske, *Helfende Kirche* (The Ministering Church), Lutherisches Verlagshaus Herbert Renner: Berlin, 1951. 52 pp.

"Any liturgy that does not release such diaconal action and that does not bring forth from the intercession at the altar plain charity to the refugee back home in the parlor, would degenerate into the 'noise of the songs' against which the Old Testament prophets arose in heated passion." Noske borrowed this quotation from General Superintendent G. Jacob, but we may regard it as characterizing the spirit of his own booklet. A new spirit of res-

pensibility among lay people has risen out of the affliction of the Evangelical Church in East Germany, and it has released powerful diaconal forces. You cannot read Noske's pamphlet without being convinced that it has an urgent commission to fulfil, not least among the churches west of the iron curtain.

S. D.

Gerhard Noske, *Wicherns Plan einer kirchlichen Diakonie* (Wichern's plan for church diacony), Evangelisches Verlagswerk: Stuttgart, 1952. 120 pp.

According to the Roman Catholic historian Franz Schnabel, Wichern was "the strongest and most impressive personality produced by Protestantism during the 19th century". In contrast to Fliedner, he was keenly aware of the tension between the institutional and congregational characteristics in the diaconate of that day. As Eugen Gerstenmaier points out in Krimm's previously discussed symposium, the gigantic achievement that Wichern managed to accomplish aimed merely at one half of what he regarded as the Church's diaconal task. The other half, or that which Gerstenmaier calls "Wichern II", still exists only as a draft outline. Therefore it is important that Wichern's ideas become known and are pondered anew under current circumstances. We owe Noske a debt of gratitude for contributing towards this end by his book and for risking, in his closing chapter, an attempt to transpose these ideas into the modern situation.

S. D.

## THE "REALM" OF THE CHURCH

Our life and thought on the Church and in the Church is bound with almost suggestive force to the concept of location or, rather, locations, or realms. We think and talk in realms; the realm of the world and the realm of the Church stand face to face.

But even within the Church there are different, confessionally determined, realms and domains: there is the Catholic—the word has long since degenerated from its universal implication to a limited meaning—and the Protestant realm, to which you might add the further subdivisions or additions of the Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, and others. But it does not end here: Within the separate "confessions" you have the missionary and the liturgical realm, there are the domains of youth work, of Caritas, of theology. There are numerous cross-stratifications within the Church and the denominations, and most have set up their own ecumenical movement in the course of the past hundred years; indeed they contributed considerably to the formation of the present World Council of Churches: missions, the student and youth associations, evangelism, the liturgical movement, international and interconfessional associations of theologians. If you are aware of the Church's current reality, you will know that the differences between her offices, groups, and agencies are quite often no less marked than the differences between the various denominations. In the course of the publishing year now drawing to a close, editing our journal has frequently called to our attention this rivalry of various domains and branches of work; where a magazine is concerned, there is a strange inclination to measure and compare the amount of space put at everyone's disposal. And after all, you must be blind not to notice that relations among churches frequently parallel existing political structures which in turn are dominated by a violent dualism expressed in totalitarian claims or offers of co-existence, according to conditions. When a West-German pastor bursts into tears on the occasion of a Russo-German soccer match in Kirov stadium and reports this as part of an ecumenical visit to the Metropolitan of Leningrad (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, August 1954) you may simply regard this as sentimentality. But how about so many of the other encounters in West and East, and between them both, for which the participation of the Holy Spirit is all too readily claimed?

Yet we must, by all means, admit that these frequently overlapping realms of the Church are, for all this rivalry, increasingly conscious of their own insufficiency; and this brings about the desire for synthesis: liturgy and evangelism, faith and order, freedom and social justice. The attempt at synthesis, perhaps along Anglican lines, seems to express a vision by which many people in so-called Protestantism expect not only to overcome confessional divisions but also to fill the strange void within their own church life.

It would surely be wrong to counter these expectations with a declamatory repetition of the Reformation's *sola fide*. Yet they are reason enough to reassess the full compass of this Reformation formula. We need to recall that this formula intended to testify to the full presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament and that it, certainly, was not at fault if many of the churches of the Reformation experienced the withdrawal into inwardness which finally led to utter neglect of the material side of church life and human life in general. To Karl Holl's statement that "Elevation towards personal certitude implied breaking through the sacramentally magic and attainment of a spiritual understanding of the divine", Reginald

Prenter adds the following in his work on Luther (*Spiritus Creator*, Copenhagen, 1944 and 1946; German edition, Munich, 1954): "Luther regards the Word itself as sacramental in the sense of an external, one might be justified in saying: material, non-spiritual thing. For Luther sees the Word not as the bearer of abstract content, but as the medium of God's concrete act of revelation, as — a Sacrament."

These are momentous statements, momentous for the future of our church and ecumenical work. They should call our attention to the fact that Amsterdam's distinction between "Protestant" and "Catholic" types of churches is certainly not based on any Reformation concept of the Church. Moreover, they should show us that all talk of realms becomes meaningless wherever the real presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament is apprehended, believed, and lived. Thus the current ecumenical conversation almost inevitably forces Lutheranism to point to the Reformation's *sola fide*.

This thought will no doubt be prominent during the preparations of the 1957 Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation which are now getting under way and to which our journal will be increasingly devoted in the period ahead. We ought all to be aware that this is not a matter of maintaining a specifically Lutheran concern, much less of defending a peculiarly Lutheran "realm", but of preserving the meaning of what the New Testament calls Church.

If you should ever look up the word *τόπος* in a New Testament concordance, you will find that the only sense in which the notion of realms is mentioned is in talking of the realm of God's activity and that wherever man searches for a realm of his own, he "gives place to the devil". This knowledge should add breadth to our ecumenical conversation and also the obligation to commitment.

Hans Bolewski

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LUTHERAN WORLD  
Official Publication of the  
LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

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*Publishers:*

Sonntagsblatt Inc., Jenischstr. 48, Hamburg-Kleinflottbek

Printers: Grindeldruck Inc., Grindelberg 13—17, Hamburg 13

The Lutheran World is a quarterly with an English and a German edition (German edition: Lutherische Rundschau)

Regular subscription rate for one year \$ 1.75

Regular subscription rate for two years \$ 3.00

Price of each copy \$ 0.50 or its equivalent in local currencies

Orders can be sent directly to the publishers or

For the United States to: National Lutheran Council, 50 Madison Avenue, New York 10 / N. Y. (USA)

For Canada to: National Committee, 237 King Street W., Kitchener, Ontario (Canada)

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